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WINTER 2022

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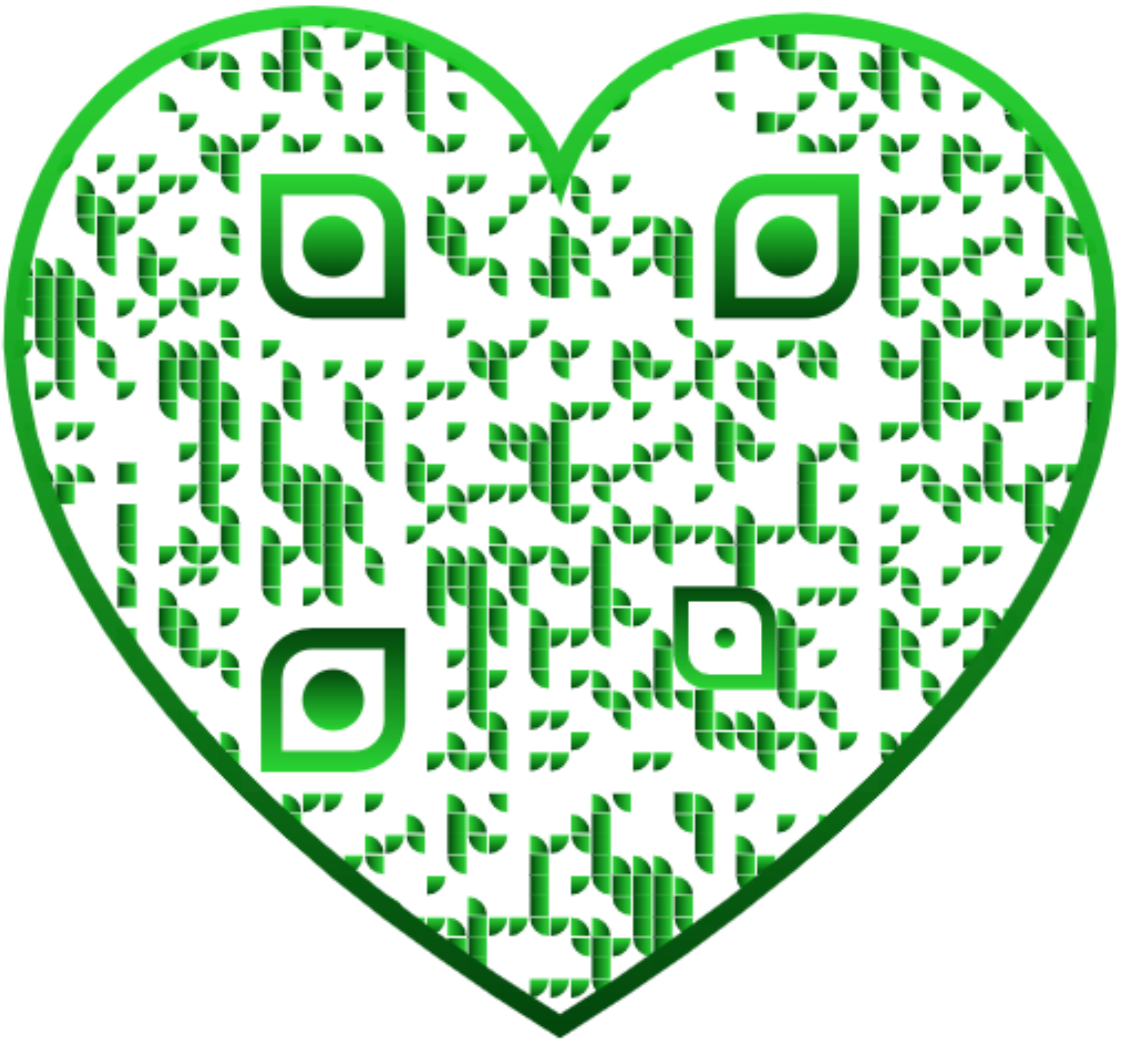

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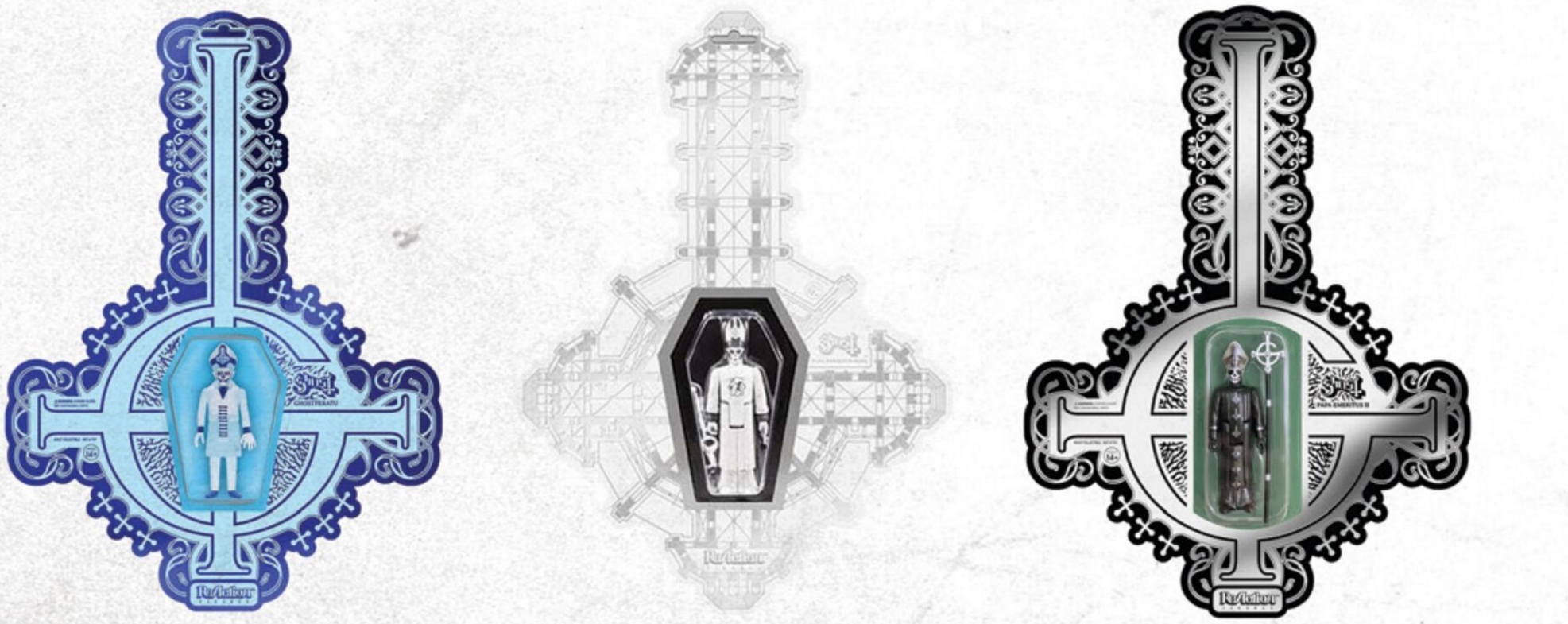

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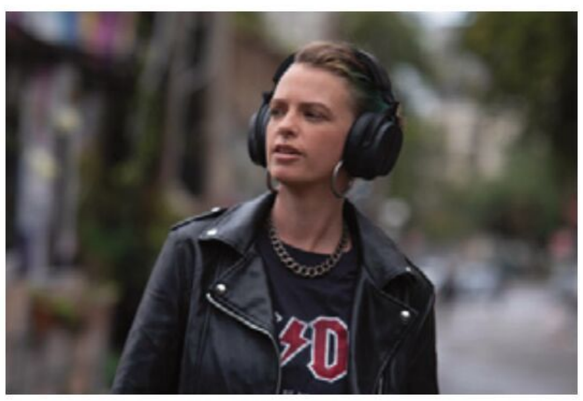

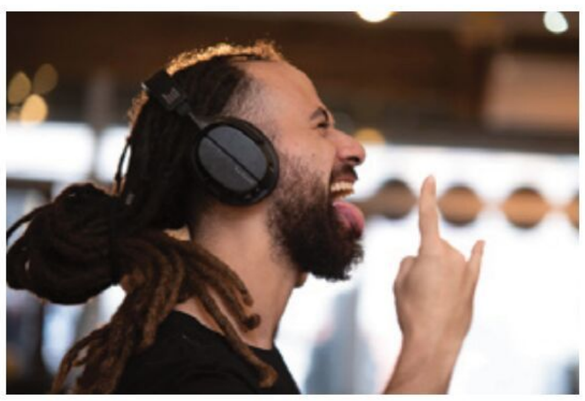
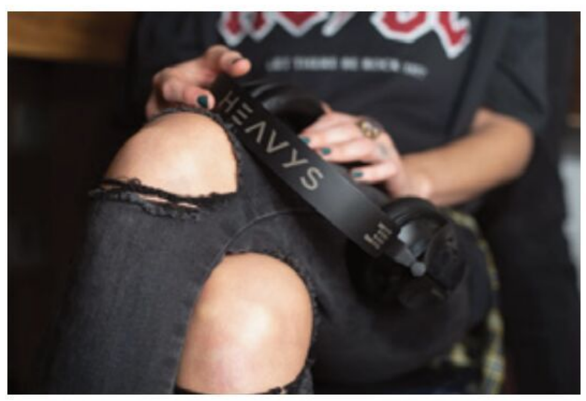

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ONE OF THE COOLEST THINGS ABOUT WORKING AT *REVOLVER* IS GETTING TO cover so many of my favorite musical artists. What's even cooler is getting to actually work with some of them as creative collaborators.

Over the years, we've enlisted everyone from Corey Taylor and M. Shadows to Code Orange's Reba Meyer and Black Dahlia's late, great Trevor Strnad to do interviews for us or to write op-eds or lists. Randy Blythe has shot photos for us. Baroness' John Baizley has painted original artwork.

Buzz Osborne is another musician who's stepped over onto this side of things to help us make cool shit. A couple years ago, he both interviewed Rob Halford for us *and* shot the photos for our Mr. Bungle cover story.

As it turns out, when Buzz's buddy Adam Jones found out that Buzz had shot a cover story for *Revolver*, he wanted to do so, too. And with the Melvins turning 40 in early 2023, the stars aligned perfectly.

Adam was a pleasure to work with. He was full of ideas and ready to put in the work. He found a killer location and shot with the Melvins for nine hours. Really, the results speak for themselves.

So, thanks to Adam. Thanks to Buzz. Thanks to every other musician who has ever done an interview, written an article, shot photos or created art for us. As cool as it is for us to see you covered on these pages, it's even cooler to see your name in the masthead.

Brandon Geist
Editorial Director/Chief Content Officer

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UPRISING

Escuela Grind's Katerina Economou

ARTISTS YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW

LUCAS JENKINS

01

Escuela Grind, (from left) Jesse Fuentes, Kris Morash, Tom Sifuentes and Katerina Economou

Escuela Grind

Inside an architect's journey into mind-expanding, twerk-inducing grindcore

ESCUELA GRIND ARE HERE TO SCHOOL YOU – IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. WITH their new sophomore album *Memory Theater*, the New England-based band (whose name literally translates to "school" grind) first and foremost present a masterclass in punishing, invigorating grindcore. They break out of the boundary's norms, crafting longer, more dynamic songs, which they infuse with elements of powerviolence and death metal. But even beyond the sonics, this is a fascinatingly intellectual take on the genre. Vocalist Katerina Economou, 31, is an architect by trade and drew on their interest in philosophy and history for the album's concepts — hitting the books researching deep thinkers such as Michel Foucault, John Locke and Plato to fuel their lyrics on politics, identity and trauma.

"If I could be in school forever I probably would — I love learning, I love reading, I love researching," they tell *Revolver*, sitting alongside Escuela Grind's 34-year-old drummer Jesse Fuentes. "In anything I do, be it an architecture project or an art project, I think it's important to gather all the influences and know as much as you can about something that interests you."

While this all might sound impenetrable, Escuela Grind filter these academic concepts through absolutely wild, pit-whipping sounds. For proof look no further than their live shows: chaotic, fun, inclusive affairs that regularly include audience members cartwheeling, sweeping the floor with each other, and even twerking. "People are dancing however the fuck they feel like it," Fuentes says proudly. "We've always been really proud of the energy we bring live, and that went on to be translated to the album," says Economou.

The band made waves with their ferocious 2020 debut *Indoctrination*; with *Memory Theater*, Escuela Grind step up their sound, incorporating inspiration from diverse sources including Slipknot and EDM, while reframing their lyrical themes to have a more potent personal impact. It's their first album for MNRK Heavy (High on Fire, Crowbar), and the first time they've worked with iconic producer and Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou. They've also recently wrapped up a mammoth five-month touring run across the U.S. and Europe, which featured a spot at Psycho Las Vegas Festival alongside Suicidal Tendencies and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony. It's obvious the

TEXT Mia Hughes
PHOTOGRAPHY Jonathan Vahid

Memory Theater, 2022; *Indoctrination*, 2020

hard-working band is on the rise, and *Memory Theater* is an exciting step on that journey.

Fuentes grew up in Dallas, where their dad taught them guitar and introduced them to metal. They were a troublemaker; but once they fell in love with music, they changed direction. "There's a lot of aggression where I grew up," they say. "You either become a gangster and go to jail or die, or you do something cool with your life." Meanwhile, Economou was the opposite, a quiet and shy kid from small-town Massachusetts. "I didn't have a lot of kids my age to hang around with. So that yearning for a community [drew me to metal]."

Economou and Fuentes met through mutual friends in Dallas, then moved together to Ithaca, New York. It was in that "pretty small college town [with] lots of hippies" where they formed Escuela Grind — Economou's first ever band — simply for something fun to do. Kris Morash would later join on guitar, and Tom Sifuentes on bass. They started gigging in 2016 and dropped *Indoctrination* four years later. While writing *Memory Theater* over the pandemic, Economou, Fuentes and Morash all moved into a house together in Economou's hometown of Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

"There's just nothing to do — we have to drive two and a half hours to go to shows," says Fuentes. "So a lot of the energy that's not going into being out and being social was going into playing our music. We would write riffs, we'd talk shop, and it was literally Escuela Grind all the time."

After an extended writing process involving constant editing and rewriting, the band went on to record with Ballou. "I grew up in Massachusetts in the '90s, so Converge was the biggest thing ever — so already the pressure was on," says Economou. Yet Escuela Grind were determined to keep their own identity alive, which Ballou was game for. "Jesse was recording to a metronome, and it just wasn't sounding like us. So Jesse ditched it and we did the more true approach to how we play, and it came out a lot better. And Kurt was into it too. … It was really daunting, but also extremely chill."

Lyrically, Economou felt compelled to explore their most personal material yet. Where *Indoctrination*'s songs tackled "some big political and philosophical ideas," Economou explains that for *Memory Theater* they "really wanted to narrow it in, bring it down to a level of how those things affect you … It's cool to write about the anxieties of the world, but I can only really see that through my narrow lens." On "All Is Forgiven" they write about the process of growing through trauma, and on "Cliffhanger" they address the fight to maintain their own opinion and point of view. "The Feed" unpacks their unease with social media and technology, while on "Endowed With Windows," a track about looking beyond stereotypes, they bark: "Access my mind through all its windows/Not through my hormones, nor through my skin tone."

The political unrest of the United States throughout the pandemic was also a major influence on the album, directly fueling the rage and frustration heard on "Faulty Blueprints" and "Forced Collective Introspection." "The more you consume in the research that I was doing, and the more you try to understand why people act the way they do or why injustice is happening, the more angry and jaded it makes you," says Economou.

"People are angry right now, and this album is a communicative tool for progress," Fuentes adds. "It's like, get me the fuck out of home right now, I need to tour the world and talk with people. Everywhere we go, the fans have that angst as well. Everyone's got stress and something to let off on you. And to me it's relatable, so I always listen."

Escuela Grind are aware of their growing platform and the power it affords them, and they take the opportunity to make their shows an inclusive, safe space. "Before we end our set we always make sure to give a really big shout-out to the girls, the gays, the theys, people of color, trans friends," says Economou. "You might feel like that's not necessary to say in a place like Brooklyn or Philly. But we played in Omaha, and someone came up to me and told me about how they had rocks thrown at them not that long ago. So yeah, it bears repeating still, and we're never gonna stop that."

"I feel grateful that we're able to make people in our community feel comfortable to be themselves," adds Fuentes. The band emphasize playing with artists from all styles of music, from punk to hip-hop to any of the varying metal subgenres. Their mission is to break down any and all walls in the heavy-music world.

"Not to say that we're the bastions of a genre or anything, but when people from other scenes come to our show, we do have to represent for our genre," says Economou. "We are fun people to be around, we are saying something important, and we're here to support you too — so have a good time."

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Cold Gawd, (from left) Steven Esquibel, Arturo Ramirez, Matt Wainwright, Cameron Burris, George Camacho and Cameron Fonacier

Cold Gawd

TEXT Emma Madden
PHOTOGRAPHY Devon Cohen

Meet the Deftones-endorsed shoegaze outfit on a mission to "smash down walls," reshape the genre and change lives

COLD GAWD'S MATT WAINWRIGHT HAS TWO GOALS: first, to make shoegaze music Black again; and then, to change people's lives. "It's good to start small, start in shoegaze, change the genre. Then after that: alright, what's next?" he says, his voice satiny and serene. "I know my world's bigger than just changing the music game which I'm going to do, no problem."

As leader of the Southern California shoegaze outfit Cold Gawd, Wainwright intends to "smash down walls" and inspire people of color to take up space in today's scene. "I might not slap the message on shirts but even just our existence in the genre — that's message enough," he says. The band's new sophomore album, *God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here* (their first for Dais Records), is a love letter to the genre as well as an update of it; combining R&B melodies with crepuscular shoegaze textures. It's already found a fan in Deftones, who invited the band to play their Dia De Los Deftones 2022 fest. "Being a person of color and getting out there and playing guitar music — I'm proving that we can do it too."

Wainwright was born on Christmas Eve, 1995 — a year after the disbanding of A.R. Kane, the Black U.K. shoegaze band whose pioneering work helped pave the way for genre leaders My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive. He was raised in Rancho Cucamonga, a pleasant community situated in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains about 40 miles east of Los Angeles, and describes his suburban upbringing as "pretty easy, pretty cush." But life wasn't without its challenges, including his parents' divorce when he was 15.

On Sundays, he'd go to church; one of the only Black kids there. He sang onstage, drawing quick Michael Jackson comparisons from the white churchgoers. "Maybe it's just being an attractive Black guy, but you always get compared to attractive Black people," he says. During the week, he'd attend his mostly white high school where he became known for being the only Black kid into alternative music. "This was in the mid-2000s, before liking everything was cool." With the sounds of Slipknot, Metallica and Green Day soundtracking his school days, he dressed like a walking Hot Topic: band tee, dangling chain — everything except the JNCOs. "My parents would say, 'Um, We'll get you the Slipknot shirt, but we'll have to get your jeans from Macy's," he recalls.

From a young age, Wainwright was identified and defined by his interests; the bands he wore on his T-shirts were as vital to his internal framework as

God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here, 2022; *The Creative Pursuits of Me and You*, 2020

his own developing psychology. To everyone else, he wasn't merely Matt Wainwright — he was the resident Slipknot fan, Kanye fan, the mallcore maverick.

In the 2010s, he found a digital home and community on Tumblr — a deeply earnest space where fandom flourished, and likeminded peers created intense bonds over shared interests. Wainwright used the vast platform as an arena for music exploration. "I wouldn't even do homework, I'd just be up all night scrolling and reblogging, listening to everything," he says. "I'd see a picture of a band playing, look through the tags and discover Tigers Jaw, Basement, Superheaven. I would dig and dig." Wainwright is the first to admit that without Tumblr, he wouldn't be who he is today. "It made everything feel so tangible and new."

In his own music, Wainwright tries to emulate these intense feelings of discovery; that moment when he first came upon the ethereal open deserts of shoegaze and nu-gaze — music that made it impossible to decipher where the sound stopped and heaven started. He can pinpoint the exact moment he first heard Nothing's *Guilty of Everything*: senior year, second period of English class, headphones hidden in his ears, phone below his desk. His world shifted. "I was going track by track thinking, *What is this music?* I'd never heard anything like it before."

In the pre-Nothing days, he'd been submerged in the chaotic, atonal world of the emo revival, but *this* was entirely new: guitar music with beauty as its governing aesthetic. "It was this new experience of entering into this world of pretty haze." He'd found his make-out music.

Wainwright loves love. "It's the most important human emotion besides feeling inspired," he says. From the age of 18 onwards, shoegaze has been Wainwright's primary love language. "I would show people Whirr's *Around* EP. That's baby-making music for sure."

Today, Wainwright becomes emotional when he talks about his girlfriend (which he does, often). She's his right-hand and his partner, his muse and confidant. For most of their relationship, he'd talk her ear off about how he dreamed of owning a pink Fender Jazzmaster, like the one Nothing's former guitarist Brandon Setta played. She finally got it for him two Christmases ago. "The second I got that guitar, *God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here* was written," he says. "She is the catalyst to everything."

Wainwright and his girlfriend had been living together in Chicago for two years when the pandemic hit. He'd go to his job at a local cafe and return home without the salvation of one of his usual escapes (no bars, no shows). Then, it'd be time to go to work again, barriers blocking off the coffee servers from the customers. Wainwright felt like he was working in a cage, siloed off from the rest of the world. "Let's go get lattes from the bubble boy," said the regulars. God get me the fuck out of here, he'd think.

So, he began working on his escape. First, creatively, by channeling his frustrations into his music and writing the entire *God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here* album, by himself, in one month. And a year later, physically: In March 2021 the multi-instrumentalist moved back west to the Inland Empire, where he eventually tracked and mixed the record with Gabe Largaespada at Open Ocean Records. Since Wainwright's settled back on his home turf, he's fleshed out his band to a six-piece — and his ambition for Cold Gawd continues to grow. He doesn't just want to be a somebody, he wants to be the biggest somebody out there. "I think this record is a great start to that," he says.

God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here certainly sounds like euphoric liberation. With its ample use of R&B 7th chords, which coruscate like shining stones under a wash of distortion and fuzz, the music on the album is woozy, lovely and rapturous; its most obvious antecedent being Whirr's *Sway*. "I want to add more beauty to the world," says Wainwright. "You see so much of the bland and mundane shoved directly front and center in your day, but there are still beautiful works of art out there … and I want Cold Gawd to be a part of that."

It's a kind of beauty that drew in Chino Moreno as soon as he heard it. Wainwright says the Deftones frontman was introduced to Cold Gawd through electronic musician Joshua Eustis a.k.a. Telefon Tel Aviv, who provided additional mastering for *God Get Me the Fuck Out of Here*. After attending a Cold Gawd show in L.A. and posting it to his Instagram story, Eustis told Wainwright: "Dude, you will not believe the conversations I'm having about you now." A week later, Wainwright received an email from Live Nation asking if he wanted to play Dia De Los Deftones in November. Wainwright's been thinking about it ever since, working meticulously on a setlist, exclusive merch, stage design. "The goal is to stand out," he says. "There's so much mediocrity thrown at you in your life. As Cold Gawd, I want to be the thing that stands above mediocrity. I want to change lives."

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L.S. Dunes

How a supergroup featuring members of My Chemical Romance, Circa Survive, Thursday and Coheed and Cambria acted as a "life preserver" during the pandemic's darkest hours

TEXT Mia Hughes
PHOTOGRAPHY Nicole Mago

CIRCA SURVIVE AND SAOSIN SINGER ANTHONY Green may have made his name fronting two of the most important post-hardcore bands of the Aughts, but it wasn't until the 40-year-old musician formed the new supergroup L.S. Dunes with his pals in My Chemical Romance, Coheed and Cambria and Thursday that he created something that would impress his 10-year-old self. "I spent a lot of time as a kid listening to music and imagining myself in the band," he tells *Revolver* today. "I can remember being in the backseat of my mom's car and listening to *Core* by Stone Temple Pilots and fantasizing that I was the drummer or the guitar player. If I went back in time and played my younger self the L.S. Dunes album my heart would have just exploded with joy. My younger self would be so proud of me."

Indeed, the project's debut album, *Past Lives,* is the sound of five music lifers rediscovering the joy of rocking out at a time when that pursuit had been cruelly halted. Formed remotely in 2020 after the pandemic stamped out everyone's touring plans, vocalist Green is joined by My Chem's Frank Iero (guitar), Coheed's Travis Stever (guitar) and Thursday's Tim Payne and Tucker Rule (bass and drums, respectively). Across the album, they veer from mathy experimentalism and urgent hardcore heaviness to unabashed rock-star riffing. "It reminds me of everything I love about rock & roll," says Green, "from At the Drive-In to PJ Harvey to Nirvana and the Breeders and Queens of the Stone Age."

L.S. Dunes, (from left) Travis Stever, Tim Payne, Anthony Green, Frank Iero and Tucker Rule

The band members' paths have intertwined for more than two decades, when they all began to dominate the East Coast post-hardcore scene around the turn of the millennium. They've toured together, shared rehearsal spaces and attended each other's kids' birthday parties. Thanks to all of this shared history, L.S. Dunes felt natural and easy from the outset. "We skipped all of the weirdness behind figuring out how everything's gonna work," Green explains, "and everybody just jumped in headfirst."

"To start a band with people that you wanna hang out with regardless is an awesome thing," adds Iero, calling in from the Oakland stop of MCR's massive reunion tour. "Those types of bands are normally ones that you start when you're young, like in high school, and that's what this felt like." Green sums up the feeling with an apt analogy: "It's like when you go on a first date with somebody, and you just expect it to be like, OK, we'll see how this goes … and then you're like, Holy shit, I'm fucking in love. I'm ready to propose!"

L.S. Dunes was also a much-needed source of support and catharsis for the musicians as they all dealt with the myriad uncertainties of the pandemic. "Circa Survive was due to go on tour in three weeks when the [lockdowns started]," Green says. "I was devastated. I have four children, and I didn't know how I was gonna provide for my family. I tried to keep my cool as much as I could, but I really had a breakdown. I couldn't fathom having any hope."

"There was definitely a sense of depression and desperation," confirms Iero, who had been days away from the My Chem tour kickoff in Australia when

"I desperately needed a project that was heavier and more aggressive, just because I was feeling all these emotions. It's nice to have a place where I can yell and scream and go wild."
— Anthony Green

Past Lives, 2022

everything was canceled. "This project was very much like someone throwing [us] a life preserver — [we] clung to it." With no expectations beyond the vital need to make something, the band were able to indulge in pure creativity and freely channel their turbulent emotions into the music. "It was like hitting rock bottom," explains Iero, "and when you hit the bottom, it opens the door to freedom."

Green recalls the recording of the ripping lead single "Permanent Rebellion" as a key turning point. The singer had initially planned to write a melody for the chorus, but instead he just let loose an intense barrage of screams. It worked perfectly, and the rest of the band was onboard. "Everybody [was] just championing each other's ideas, and that just makes you wanna go even harder," he says of the creation of *Past Lives*, which was recorded with producer Will Yip (Turnstile, Code Orange). "I know that I desperately needed a project that was heavier and more aggressive, just because I was feeling all these emotions. It's nice to have a place where I can yell and scream and go wild." Meanwhile, Iero was similarly branching out, incorporating mathy guitar techniques like tapping that he had never used in previous bands. "Something really, really special about this band was that risks we were taking that normally wouldn't end up on a record ended up on this record," he says.

Lyrically, Green explored the panic, mistrust and denial he saw bubbling all across the country as the pandemic became a divisive political issue. "We needed illumination — we needed light being shone on all this fear and hatred around us," he says. Meanwhile, Green describes the record's most personal song, the blistering opener "2022," as "the most fucked-up song I ever wrote." Penned in 2021, it presents Green's grim vision of the future ("If I can't make it 'till 2022/Least we'll see how much I can take") and also refers directly to when he survived an overdose: "I sometimes wish she hadn't found me on the night/I tried to disappear."

"That's a heavy statement, but it's true — and sometimes the truth weighs a ton," says Green. "I feel bad for my family who has to hear that song. Before the song came out, I sat with my kids and I told them, 'Hey, listen, this song is coming out, and I want you to know that you can always talk to me about anything, and that we can get through anything together.' It's really important for me to make sure that they realize that I love them, and that they're worth it."

Now that Green has reached the year he once feared he wouldn't, "2022" has become a triumphant anthem for the singer. "I'm in such a different place than I was when I wrote that song," he reveals. "So to sing it now feels very victorious." L.S. Dunes realized that celebration at this year's Riot Fest. It was their first show — and only the sixth time they had ever played together in-person as a band, including rehearsals. "I was so nervous beforehand," says Green of the show, the attendance of which rivaled the singer's set with Circa Survive the previous year. "[But] when I got up there, it felt like our hundredth show. It felt like we had been a band for 10 years. When we played 'Permanent Rebellion,' everybody went nuts, and people were screaming along to the chorus. It's more than you can hope for. I feel so lucky."

"It was, hands down, the best first show I've ever played with *any* band," adds Iero. "It felt magical."

And as far as L.S. Dunes are concerned, this is just the beginning. Now that the world has opened back up, Green, Iero, Stever, Payne and Rule are all busy as ever with their respective projects, but there are no plans to leave L.S. Dunes behind. "We haven't even begun to experience and experiment with what we have," says Green. "Once we get together in a room to actually write songs or to jam — which we've never done as a band — that shit is going to *explode*."

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04

Tallah, (from left) Derrick Schneider, Max Portnoy, Justin Bonitz, Alex Snowden and Alizé "Mewzen" Rodriguez

Tallah

TEXT Eli Enis
PHOTOGRAPHY Clip Hall

With an elite prog-metal pedigree, these nu-metal revivalists are winning the hearts and minds of the hardcore masses

THE HARDCORE BROS ARE SKEPTICAL. IT'S MARCH 2022, and Tallah are taking the stage in an old church basement outside of Pittsburgh where they're serving as direct support to the hometown heroes of heavy, Code Orange. From their beanie-clad frontman to a keyboardist dressed like a Tim Burton character, this ragtag group of nu-metal misfits (hailing from across the state in the Lehigh Valley) look like they could each be in five different bands. And *none* of them are visually in-line with the big guys in Terror shirts who're glaring, arms crossed, in the back of the crowd.

Cut to mid-set — and the place has erupted into gleeful mosh madness. Tallah's ravenous energy and torrential nu-metal-meets-hardcore heaviness have won over the scowling cynics.

"I think if we're in front of *any* audience, there will be people who like us just from a performance aspect; we're just so fun to watch," proudly declares drummer Max Portnoy. He's talking with *Revolver* today from a venue in Brooklyn. It's been a half-a-year since that Pittsburgh show, and the musician has logged a lot more time onstage winning over audiences — both with Tallah (at gigs opening for Attila, Drowning Pool and more) and as Code Orange's current touring drummer.

Tallah are here in New York to unleash another off-the-chain set, this time in support of their new sophomore album, *The Generation of Danger*. The full-length, their second for extreme-metal powerhouse Earache Records, is a jarring level-up from their also-great 2020 debut, *Matriphagy*. Over 13 songs, the band explore a ferocious fusion of early Slipknot intensity — spitfire vocals and grooves that dig deep like tractor tires on wet sod — and modern hardcore savagery à la Vein.fm and Knocked Loose. It's an explosive album that just might secure their position as the heaviest, most creative unit of the ongoing nu-metal revival.

Portnoy, now 23, formed Tallah back in 2017, but the band's creative vision wasn't solidified until the following year — when he discovered frontman Justin Bonitz, now 32, via the latter's popular YouTube channel Hungry Lights. The same week they met in person, in early 2018, they were onstage together playing Tallah's first show. The pair have been the core songwriting team from those early days, but over the years the band has grown into a collaborative affair between all players — including founding guitarist Derrick Schneider and the more recent additions of rhythm guitarist Alex Snowden and turntable-keyboardist Alizé "Mewzen" Rodriguez.

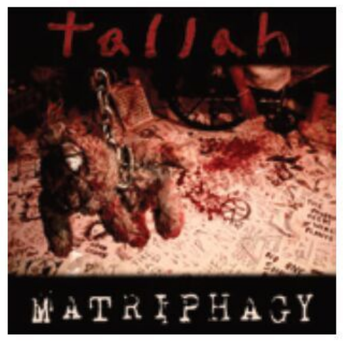
Portnoy writes all the instrumentation for Tallah, and on *The Generation of Danger* he really lets his jazz training shine through with proggier, more experimental passages. He comes to the style honestly. His father is Mike Portnoy, the prolific prog-metal drummer known for his many years in Dream Theater. Max grew up hanging with his dad on the road and in studios, and was "always smacking on my dad's drums" even before he began taking lessons at the tender age of five. He always knew he wanted to follow in his father's path, and the elder Portnoy has always been his biggest fan.

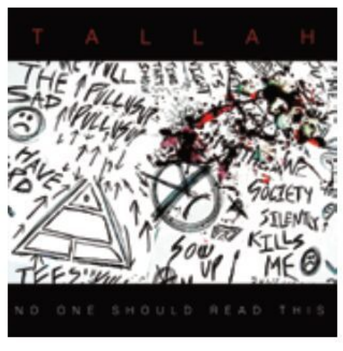
"My dad's totally into it," Portnoy says of his father's support for Tallah. "I sent my dad the mixes [of our new album] and he was blown away by it. It's awesome to have his feedback."

Bonitz also brings his full range of talents into Tallah, including his elastic vocal acrobatics, knack for creative world-building and flair for the dramatic. *Matriphagy* was a concept album about a man escaping from a bunker where his mother held him captive for 20 years. *The Generation of Danger* is an even knottier sci-fi epic about a crazed genius, featuring nine different characters that Bonitz portrays with a variety of unique vocals. And yes, he pulls them all off live.

"Onstage, I want to *be* the character delivering the

The Generation of Danger, 2022; *Matriphagy*, 2020; *No One Should Read This* EP, 2018





vocals that make people go, like, 'Holy cow, that's awesome,'" Bonitz enthuses

More than just a multifaceted vocalist, he's also known as wild performer. At one show in 2019, Bonitz scaled a high beam during Tallah's set. When a bouncer came to yank him down, the singer — assuming he was just an overly aggressive fan — booted the guy in the face and kept performing. "It just spiraled out of control after that, and I ended up getting arrested," Bonitz says sheepishly. At another gig, he ended up onstage in just a thong, which he eventually ditched for a full-nude spectacle.

Tallah incorporated their frontman's passion for live stunts into the recording of *The Generation of Danger*. For "mud_castle," they rigged an audio interface to the back of a van and drove around while Bonitz sprinted behind, clutching a microphone and screaming the lyrics. "He wouldn't slow down," exclaims Bonitz. "When we got back to the producer's house, I just ran into the bathroom and puked." Elsewhere, "For the Recognition" features the actual sounds of Bonitz being waterboarded by his bandmates, as well as the musicians smashing a shit-ton of plates on a driveway. "It took us *four hours* to sweep up all the glass." Bonitz sighs.

Whether onstage or in the booth, Tallah operate with a relentless commitment to never cut corners and always keep grinding. "I definitely have a bit of the workaholic gene [from] my dad," Portnoy admits when asked about the rigors of performing in both Tallah and Code Orange. "Tell you right now, there's no chance of *ever* playing with any other bands. Two is more than enough. My dad's in seven and I'm like, What?!"

Scheduling challenges aside, Portnoy is deeply devoted to the project, and promises two things: Tallah will never get put on the backburner — and never get any less heavy. "That's just what we love to do," he says of their commitment to pulverizing breakdowns. "No disrespect to Linkin Park … but how they went, they pretty much ditched the heavy sound. I don't know what I'm going to be thinking when I'm 50 years old — we might do more melodic stuff — but we're not trying to ditch the heaviness, ever."

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Melvins' Buzz Osborne, 2022

REBELS, INNOVATORS AND ICONOCLASTS

ADAM JONES

BUZZ SAW

For 40 years, **King Buzzo** and his wild band have been a "genre unto themselves." This is how they forever altered the course of heavy music.

TEXT **Steve Appleford**
PHOTOGRAPHY **Adam Jones**

THE END OF THE ROAD IS NEVER EXACTLY THE END FOR THE MELVINS. IT'S Halloween weekend back home in Los Angeles, and showtime is still five hours away on this final night of the band's third U.S. tour of 2022. Melvins mastermind Buzz Osborne is already thinking about next year — and taking their heavily amped walls of noise and melody on another round of gigs and recording sessions, in time to mark their 40th year as a band.

"We do 40 shows. We play for 40 minutes. It's 40 bucks to get in," Osborne says with a laugh, an explosion of gray curls piled high and wide above his impish joker's grin. The singer-guitarist isn't serious (or is he?), and as he sits with the band backstage at the Lodge Room, the man reveals nothing about how the Melvins will actually celebrate this inexplicable, monumental anniversary beyond the usual hundred or more shows they play every year, virtually without fail.

Whatever form they will take in 2023, concerts are being booked. But after tonight's show, Osborne is planning a little time off. He will return home to his wife, Mackie, and their dogs. He will sleep in his own bed for a while, and his travels will go no further than the golf course. He will be King Buzzo at rest.

Four decades is a lot of history to grapple with, and during that time about a dozen musicians and collaborators have come and gone (bass players, mostly), serving alongside the Melvins' core duo of Osborne and drummer Dale Crover, lifetime creative partners. Tonight's set in this 100-year-old dance hall and former Masonic Lodge will span a bit of that history, from 1989's slamming "Oven" to songs off their newest album, *Bad Mood Rising*, including the sludgy 14-minute opening track, "Mr. Dog Is Totally Right."

"Let me dream for a second," says Steven Shane McDonald, Melvins' bassist since 2016, long hair past his shoulders. He then offers his own unserious proposal for that anniversary. "What about Aberdeen in 2023, and we have all 10 of your bass players onstage?"

Crover calls that "a little Spinal Tap-ish." And Buzzo jokes that McDonald should just play a set of songs in the styles of each former bassist himself. It's not the craziest idea Osborne ever had.

The original Melvins emerged from the Pacific Northwest at the beginning of the Eighties, a trio of teenage rockers exploring the sonic universe from the middle of nowhere. They began life as a speedy hardcore-punk band, before evolving into something heavier. Largely inspired by early Black Sabbath and side two of Black Flag's *My War* album, they slowed down and cranked up.

By the end of that first decade, their slabs of sound were unhurried and unstoppable, a musical style as timeless and elemental as Motörhead, Slayer or the Ramones. There have been wild experiments along the way, veering in unexpected directions, but the Melvins will always be credited (and blamed) for inspiring the Nineties grunge explosion that launched Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains and more from the clubs and streets of Seattle.

"We're much weirder than the bands that sold millions of records out of that. But things that I was involved in — and the way I thought music should work — helped change things completely on a global level," says Buzzo. "That's the facts. I wasn't wrong then. I'm not wrong now."

The Melvins are now one of the last bands standing from that generation, and they're still operating at full power. Buzzo stalks stages like a high priest in a custom muumuu covered in evil eyeballs and Crover pounds the drums with gloved fists — still an inspiring marvel to witness after all these years.

"The Melvins have their own sound and it's relentless. They pummel you," says Faith No More singer Mike Patton, another musical daredevil and sometime collaborator, and the co-founder of Ipecac Records. "When people try to describe the Melvins or compare them to someone else they always fail. They are a genre unto themselves."

PHOTO ASSISTANT TRAVIS SHINN; CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER MACKIE OSBORNE

(left) Buzz Osborne;
(opposite page, from left)
Dale Crover and
Steven McDonald

"We're much weirder than the bands that sold millions of records. But things that I was involved in, and the way I thought music should work, helped change things completely on a global level. I wasn't wrong then. I'm not wrong now."
— Buzz Osborne

THE 1980S

THE MELVINS' STORY BEGINS IN THE SMALL TOWN OF MONTESANO, WASHINGTON, "Monte" to locals, where 12-year-old Buzz Osborne discovered the ways of hard rock through the songs of Aerosmith, Ted Nugent and KISS in the mid-Seventies. He was a recent transplant from the even tinier hamlet of Morton, with a population of barely more than a thousand residents. Osborne felt like an outcast, the stranger with unruly hair and attitude.

"Some people would say he was kind of an outsider," remembers his friend Mike Dillard, who knew Osborne in high school and would become the Melvins' first drummer. "He looked different than what other kids did. He didn't do what everybody else did. I just instantly gravitated towards him."

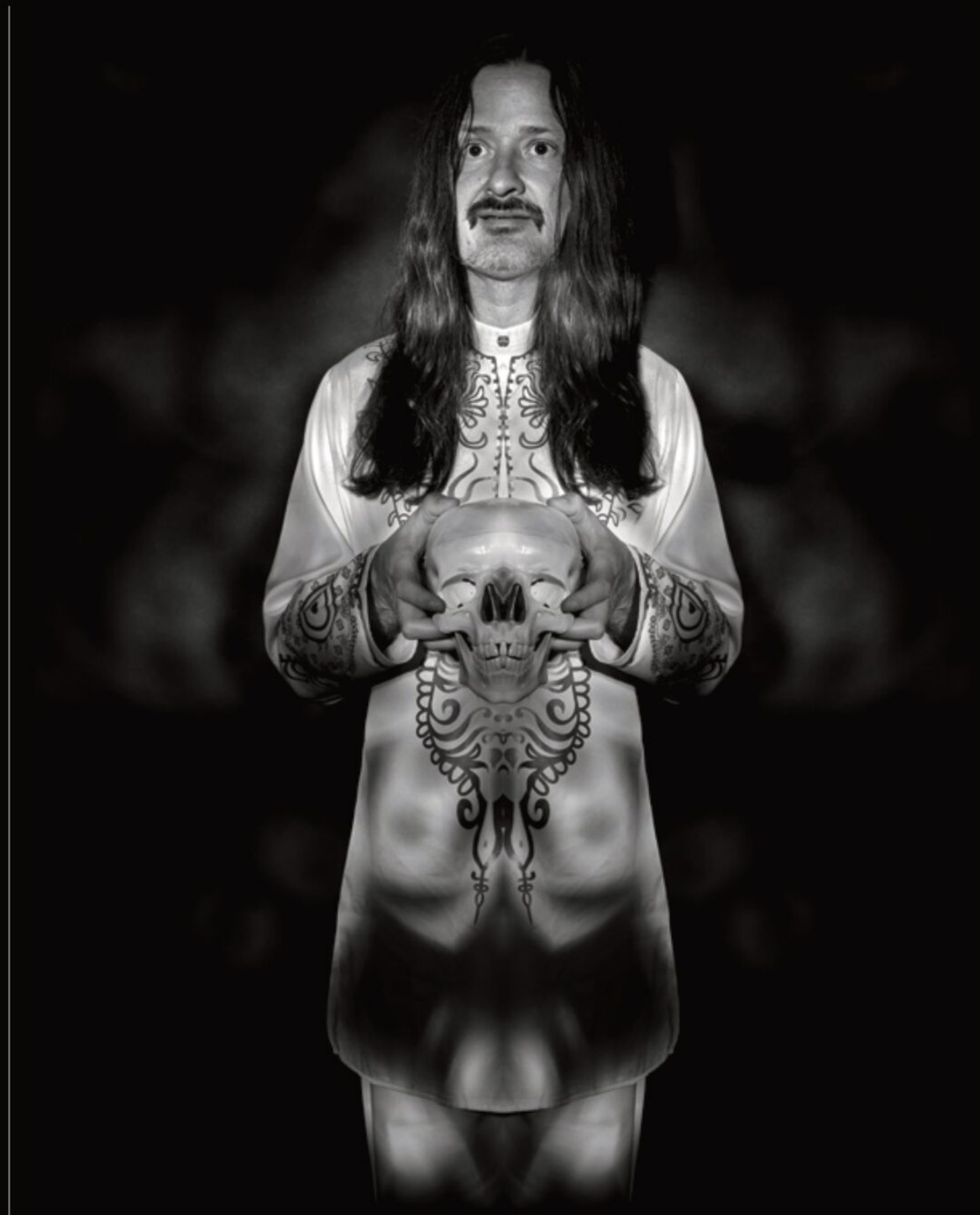
Osborne's musical horizons expanded with the help of *Creem* magazine, which introduced him to punk rock. He liked what he saw and mail-ordered albums from subversive, snarling acts like the Clash and the Sex Pistols. "I simply bought those records because of the way they looked," he says now. And from there he discovered essential protopunk acts like the Stooges and the MC5. Osborne shared both his love of punk and passionate distaste for Montesano with another younger local kid named Kurt Cobain. Buzz would share his *Creem* mags and later take Cobain to his first Black Flag show, which just might have altered the course of the future Nirvana leader's entire life.

"That's where Cobain and all of us were from," Osborne told *Revolver* in 2021. "It was hopeless. I have no fond memories of it, none of the good-old-days stuff. It was nothing but a hellish nightmare for all of us." Cultivating an acerbic, offbeat sense of humor was an early coping mechanism. ("We have a very, very dark sense of humor. As did Cobain. Cobain had one of the darkest senses of humor of anybody I've ever known.") But when Osborne picked up a guitar at age 17, playing music became the ultimate release.

In those early '80s days, he would often jam with friends in a little room above Dillard's garage. "Very, very primitive," says the drummer. Matt Lukin joined on bass, and by 1983 they were a fully functional punk trio, playing shows in nearby Aberdeen, Olympia and Seattle. Osborne wrote original songs from the beginning.

Their initial mission was to play as fast and furious as they possibly could. They called themselves the Melvins, named after the manager of a local Thriftway grocery store where Dillard and Osborne worked. He went by Pete, "but his real name was Melvin," says Dillard.

The Melvins eventually pooled what little money they'd earned from playing shows and drove out to a small studio in Olympia to record some songs (released decades later as *Mangled Demos*.) "The studio we went to was a couple of beer hippies from Olympia," recalls Dillard. "We just burned through our set. I'm sure they were happy to see us leave."



That same year, the Melvins performed at the Elks Lodge in Aberdeen, at a talent show hosted by the town's radio station. A recording of the broadcast that night documents the moment a couple of goofy on-air hosts prepared listeners for the noisy band about to play: "They're tuning up … We've got some pretty high-powered electronics floating around this room. … I'm getting frightened. … I have a hunch we're about to get our sinuses cleared." There's also a brief moment of teenage Buzz being interviewed, impatient to rock.

Crover lived in Aberdeen, so he was there too. He didn't know Buzz or the Melvins. Outside of watching the Ramones in *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, Crover had never seen a punk band perform. "It was great because they played really fast," he says. "There were no breaks in between their songs. And when the guy on the radio tried to talk, they just went right into another song."

That same night Osborne also got to see Crover's cover band play the hits: Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven," Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird," Loverboy's "The Kid Is Hot Tonight," Iron Maiden's "The Number of the Beast." Osborne watched with mixed emotions but noticed Crover behind the drumkit. "I remember thinking, This band is horrendous, but that kid's really good."

They were formally introduced by their mutual friend, Krist Novoselic, an especially tall bass player that worked at Taco Bell (and would eventually go on to conquer the world in Nirvana). When Dillard began drifting toward other interests, Osborne pulled Crover into the Melvins.

Mosh pits were receptive to their brand of aggression, but Osborne's songwriting was evolving. "I switched to something along the lines of what I felt was missing in music," he says. "It was slower and weirder — more of a Captain Beefheart-meets-heavy metal vibe."

In 1986, the Melvins attempted their first U.S. tour, packing up a 1972 Dodge van, and the slow, sludgier songs were not happily received. "People still wanted to hear superfast hardcore," says Crover. "We went down to Florida and had to deal with skinheads. Going back down there in '89 … all those people had long hair. It took them a few years to catch up, I guess."

Osborne finally felt like he landed on the sound forming in his head with "Eye Flys," the opening track on the Melvins' debut album, 1987's *Gluey Porch Treatments* (which was released on San Francisco-based Alchemy Records). The song is over six minutes of noise, beats and aggression, with Osborne's surreal madman growl: "I lay like you/I feel the same/Eye flys like you/In touch between."

Working on that first album as executive producer was Victor Hayden, a onetime member of Captain Beefheart's Magic Band who was better known as the Mascara Snake. "He saw immediately the potential of what we were doing," says Osborne. "He was the first person. He was like, 'That is really good.'"

Osborne left the Pacific Northwest for San Francisco, inspired by a new

relationship with Lori Black, bassist for the punk band Clown Alley. She called herself "Lorax," and was the daughter of '30s child star Shirley Temple. Crover soon followed, but Lukin was left behind. (Within a year, Lukin co-founded the explosive Mudhoney.) Before Crover left town, he sat in on some Nirvana sessions with his friends Cobain and Novoselic. Three of those tracks would appear on Nirvana's debut, *Bleach*, in 1989.

In San Francisco, the Melvins were resurrected as Buzzo, Crover and Black, and were welcomed in ways they'd never experienced further north. They played shows at The Covered Wagon, and connected with a supportive local record company, Boner Records. The alternative scene was just beginning to take off up in Seattle, but Osborne never looked back.

What followed were three albums in quick succession, starting with 1989's *Ozma*, which established the Melvins' reputation for possessing a new and ominous sound — colliding the heaviest metal with an uncompromising punk ethos. Many songs on *Ozma* were under two minutes, but left a lasting impression with downtuned guitars, relentless beats and upstrokes on bass from Lorax that helped lock in Osborne's weird time signatures.

"She could do it and that says a lot," Osborne tells *Revolver* today. "There's a lot of guys that we played with who would have a hard time with that stuff. It was right at the edge of what all of us were capable of doing. I was writing wacky stuff that was out of the middle of nowhere."

THE 1990S

THE NINETIES IS WHEN THE MELVINS BROUGHT THEIR WEIRDNESS TO THE WORLD at large. It was a prolific, highly successful era in which Buzz and Co.'s creative output cemented their legacy as alternative-music heroes. And that all started with 1991's *Bullhead*.

Fittingly, the Melvins' third studio album kicked off with a massive eight-minute-plus statement. "Boris" opened with a creeping, heavy riff and Crover's prominent, chopping beats — sounding as bleak as Sabbath at their scariest and as bizarre as a David Lynch film. What Buzzo was singing about is anyone's guess.

Before he was in Mastodon, singer-bassist Troy Sanders first heard *Bullhead* after guitarist Brent Hinds shared a copy. He was converted for life. "I've always been especially attracted to raw, dirty, hairy, unpolished, rock & roll," he says. "I just recognized that they were carving their own unique path."

When the Melvins began recording *Lysol*, Black was not in the band, replaced by Joe Preston. Songs were organized on the release not as individual tracks but as one continuous piece of music. The final song is "With Teeth," featuring deliberate, muscular drumbeats that left a mark.

"That's where Dale's drumming style really shines," says Coady Willis, drummer for Big Business and, later, the Melvins. "There's this tension where it feels like he's just waiting until the last possible second to smash these drums. And when that beat finally hits, it just destroys you."

When the Lysol company objected to use of its registered trademark, the 1992 album was eventually redubbed *Melvins* and later repackaged as *Lice-All*. That same year, the Melvins dropped a trio of solo EPs in the style of the solo records KISS released in 1978. Likewise, each Melvins EP cover had the face of Osborne, Crover or Preston (who was destined to be the Melvins' bassist for just one year).

By now, the scene in Seattle had exploded into the mainstream, led by their old friends Nirvana, and the music of the Melvins was rightfully credited as hugely influential on the grunge movement. Osborne and Crover were first to deliver a particular brand of sludge. They were also part of a continuum of raging underground rock known to generations of outsiders and misfits, stretching from the Stooges and the MC5 to Black Flag and Sonic Youth.

The Melvins watched the grunge explosion from afar — at first from San Francisco and later from Los Angeles (the latter of which remains their home to this day) — but it hardly mattered that they were no longer based in the rock & roll hotspot of the moment. Their old friend Cobain openly championed them, just as major labels desperately searched for their own lucrative grunge ambassadors. They got nearly 20 offers, including from labels that had previously turned them down. The Melvins signed to Atlantic and were given total freedom.

"The Melvins have their own sound and it's relentless. They pummel you. When people try to describe the Melvins or compare them to someone else they always fail."
— Mike Patton

"I want to be on the same label as the Stones and Led Zeppelin and Aretha Franklin," says Osborne. "The ironic nature of all that makes total sense to me."

Cobain signed up to produce. It was his first time in that role, and he knew enough to lean toward the Steve Albini approach, looking more to capture the band's sound rather than shape it. "I think he came into it thinking, OK, I like this band. I don't really want to fuck with what they do musically," says Crover. Even so, Cobain was clearly distracted by drug issues and the demands of his own band, and barely completed recording half of the songs before the Melvins moved on without him.

That first Atlantic album, *Houdini*, remains their best-selling release, a grunge-era epic stretching from the quiet-loud-quiet pummeling of "Lizzy" to the whiplash riffing on "Honey Bucket," as Osborne rages in a gibberish tongue. Sessions were scattered across studios in San Francisco and Seattle, producers coming and going. Lorax had returned briefly to the Melvins, but even Buzzo is uncertain whether she is on the final album. "That record was made in pieces and kind of all over the place," Osborne says now. "Most of that's me and Dale."

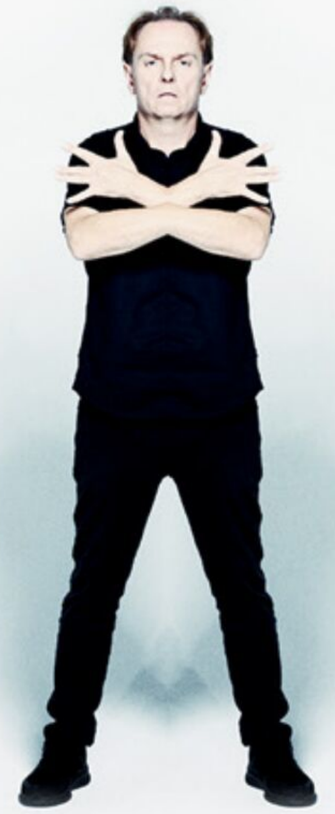
Lorax was gone from the Melvins by the time *Houdini* came out in 1993. Her substance issues were a distraction, but not the reason, Osborne says. Their romance had ended. "I would never have kicked her out because of her health issues. When me and her weren't an item anymore, it just became obvious that wasn't going to work," he explains. "She played on great records. I learned a lot from her. The good times were more than the bad times."

That same year as *Houdini*'s release, Gene Simmons from KISS wore a "Melvins Army" T-shirt designed to look like the KISS Army logo at a magazine photo shoot. Soon after, the singer-bassist joined the Melvins at the Hollywood Palladium. Together, they played the bottom-heavy 1974 KISS song "Going Blind," which the Melvins covered on *Houdini*. The performance shook the old dance hall as Simmons and Buzzo roared: "You're much younger, can't you see?/There is nothing more for you and I/I'm ninety-three, you're sixteen/And I think I'm goin' blind!"

"If you told me when I was a kid that something like that would happen I would never have believed it," says Osborne. The Melvins have remained friends with Simmons and KISS singer-guitarist Paul Stanley ever since. "Those guys have only ever been totally nice to me. They have not been the rock-star fuck-heads that a lot of other lower-level jerk-offs have been to me."

Osborne and Crover appeared on MTV's *Headbangers Ball* in 1993 to talk up *Houdini*. Host Riki Rachtman wanted to know: "How many bass players have you had in this band?"

"Uh, a lot," Osborne answered, clad in a Blondie T-shirt, his hair a globe of dark



curls. Buzz held up a snapshot of their new bassist, Mark Deutrom, notably absent, and explained, "This time we got a guitar player to play bass, because we realized that bass players are inherently dumb." He was joking (probably).

Deutrom was their 10-gallon-hat-wearing bassist for the next few years, but he already had a history with the band, producing and engineering their first two albums, *Gluey Porch Treatments* and *Ozma*. (He was also co-founder of Alchemy Records, which released *Gluey*.) He joined Osborne and Crover on their next Atlantic album, *Stoner Witch*, long a favorite of true believers. It was recorded at A&M Studios in Los Angeles.

"It was the same studio that the Stones recorded in," Crover says, still marveling. "U2 recorded *The Joshua Tree* in the same room we recorded *Stoner Witch* in. It's funny to think about."

The band's third and final Atlantic album was *Stag*. It opens with "The Bit," Crover building a mysterious ringing tone on sitar, leading into Buzzo's growling riff. For the future members of Mastodon, *Stag* was unforgettable, and the band recorded their own studio version of "The Bit" for a Record Store Day release.

"*Stag* came out and really blew my mind," Sanders remembers. "When the four of us in Mastodon met in the first week of the year 2000, one of the few questions that we asked before we got in a room to jam was: 'Do you respect and love the Melvins?' All four of us said, 'Absolutely.'"

Sanders says he once had a vivid, memorable dream of being a member of the Melvins, and in 2008 it came true when the Melvins joined Mastodon for "The Bit" during their encore at All Tomorrow's Parties in Minehead, England. "We're playing this song and the crowd is going ape," Sanders says. "In my mind, I'm losing it, but I'm trying to be solid player. We're jamming with the Melvins right now in front of people. Let's do this! I remember turning around realizing, holy shit, this is a literal dream come true. For this three-and-a-half minutes, I'm in the Melvins."

The Melvins ended the Nineties with a new musical home. In 1998, Osborne began moonlighting in Fantômas, a new band with the all-star cast of singer Mike Patton, Mr. Bungle bassist Trevor Dunn and Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo. Amazingly, this promising new act got an especially insulting rejection from a prominent indie hard-rock label. Patton and his manager, Greg Werckman, were incensed enough to create their own record company for the album called Ipecac Recordings.

Osborne immediately wanted the Melvins to be part of it. He also wanted to immediately release three albums in rapid succession: *The Maggot*, *The Bootlicker* and *The Crybaby*. Ipecac has released most Melvins projects ever since.

"When the Melvins asked to be part of Ipecac, before we launched, it instantly made it a *real* record label," says Patton. "Of course, the first thing they requested was that we help them commit career suicide by releasing three albums in one year. We happily agreed — 23 years later they are still very much alive."

THE 2000S

"MY JOB IS TO NOT BE NORMAL," SAYS BUZZ OSBORNE, AND HE'S GOOD AT IT. Nearly two decades into their career, the Melvins showed no signs of slowing down as they kept adding strange new layers to their story.

The band recorded two albums with former Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra: *Never Breathe What You Can't See* and *Sieg Howdy!* The San Francisco punk pioneer hadn't worked regularly with a band in many years, and the Melvins admired his history and stand against music censorship.

"We felt like he should be in a band and playing," says Crover. "We spent a lot of long hours working on stuff. Practices would be super long because half of them would be just bullshitting the whole time. He likes to talk; we like to talk. We never really worked with anybody quite like that before. It was pretty interesting."

Biafra is also an insomniac, so their sessions would begin in the afternoons at the earliest. The Melvins spent the rest of those days working with another unexpected collaborator, electronic musician and experimental composer Lustmord. Colliding sludge and dark ambient waves, the result was 2004's brooding epic *Pigs of the Roman Empire*.

In 2005, they parted ways with their bassist Kevin Rutmanis, who had been Deutrom's replacement since the late-Nineties but had started slipping deeper into substance-abuse issues. Though traumatic, Rutmanis credits his forced exit with saving his life. With his departure, Crover and Osborne were wary of adding a new face yet again, so their attitude going forward changed. "Basically, we want to have an open relationship," Crover explains. Osborne adds: "We're not getting mired down ever again with one guy."

After a rare break from active touring, the Melvins took another left turn: absorbing the metal duo Big Business into the band. Singer-bassist Jared Warren and drummer Coady Willis joined in 2006.

In the final days of Nirvana, Buzz says the Melvins had talked with Dave Grohl about a dual-drum collab that "was supposed to be on the *Stoner Witch* album." That never came together, but Big Business fit right in with their own frazzled walls of sound. In the double-drum setup, Willis and Crover played in tandem or layered their beats, depending on the song. Because Willis is left-handed, and Crover is right-handed, onstage they were often a thundering mirror image of each other.

"I don't think they've ever been afraid of anything creatively," says Willis. "They are pretty fearless in that realm. Once they decide on doing something, they jump right in and they do it, and they don't look back."

Big Business made four full albums with the Melvins, starting with *(A) Senile Animal* in 2006. And on the road, the longtime Melvins fans within Big Business dove headfirst into the depths of the band's huge catalog. But some mysteries remained forever unsolved.

"I had questions, and people I knew had questions, about lyrics. Like, 'What's he saying?'" reveals Warren, often called on to sing backup on the classic material. "I never got a straight answer about what the lyrics were. There's a bunch of songs that are notorious for sounding like he's making up words. I was never told any different, so I just sang the made-up words I thought he was singing and that was that."

THE 2010S

THE MELVINS STRETCHED FORWARD AND BACKWARD DURING THE 2010S. THEY toured as Melvins Lite with Trevor Dunn on acoustic double-bass and pulled him into one of Buzzo's craziest ideas yet: touring all 50 states (plus Washington, D.C.) in 51 days in 2012. They launched from Alaska and closed in Honolulu, a colossal challenge of routing and endurance.

Buzz and Dale also reconvened with the band's original drummer, Mike Dillard, who had remained close with them over the years. As Melvins 1983, the new trio was described by Osborne as a project "as close to the original lineup as we're willing to get." Working around Dillard's vacation days from his job as a machinist in Washington, they began recording new music — Dillard on drums and Crover on bass — so far releasing 2013's *Tres Cabrones* and 2021's *Working With God*. "The fact that [Buzz] brought me back into the fold was an amazing thing for me," says Dillard. "I honestly couldn't believe it."

After nearly a decade, the band's time with Big Business concluded without angst or even much of a discussion. Warren and Willis were told the Melvins were going to tour with McDonald the following year, which didn't seem out of character for a band that had recently toured as Melvins 1983 and Melvins Lite. But it was soon clear they were parting ways with Big Business, at least for now.

"I had one conversation with Buzz ... about royalties," Willis recalls. "I was like, 'Oh, I was just wondering because we're not in the band anymore ...' And he said, 'Who said you aren't in the band anymore?' I was like, 'Oh, OK.'"

They last appeared on 2016's *Basses Loaded*, a collection of songs recorded with six different bass players. One of them was McDonald, best known then for his work with Redd Kross and OFF! Also on the record were Dunn, Butthole Surfers' Jeff Pinkus and Krist Novoselic. (The ex-Nirvana bassist also played accordion, a first for the Melvins.)

"It's almost like a Spinal Tap joke about bass players with them. Instead of drummers, it's exploding bass players," says McDonald, who first met the Melvins at a 1996 Yoko Ono concert at the Roxy Theatre in West Hollywood. Osborne and Crover joined Yoko onstage for a show-closing jam session.

Prior to that, the Melvins mostly knew of McDonald for his decades of work with Redd Kross, the genre-blending punk/rock/pop/psychedelic band that he formed with his brother Jeff when they were 11 and 15, respectively. Crover has since signed up as drummer for Redd Kross as well. "There's a lot of musical common threads," says McDonald of Crover's playing. "As beastly as he can attack the drums, he can also have a light touch and be groovy and he can Ringo it up too. He's a really broad drummer and he's got deep taste."

The trio's first full-length project together was 2017's *A Walk With Love & Death* double-album (one record of songs, plus a second of soundtrack music for a 33-minute experimental film directed by Jesse Nieminen), which was followed by 2018's *Pinkus Abortion Technician* (which also featured bass contributions from Jeff Pinkus). "Anytime people think they've got his number, he changes it," McDonald says of Osborne's adventurous creativity.

THE 2020S AND BEYOND

FITTINGLY, THE FIRST POST-PANDEMIC ALBUM BY THE MELVINS WAS ABSURD. The previously mentioned *Working With God*, released in February 2021, kicked off with a joyously madcap cover of the Beach Boys' "I Get Around," reworked as "I Fuck Around." "We'd been saying we should do an exact replica because it would be hilarious," Osborne told *Revolver* upon its release. "And then what we realized was replicating the Beach Boys is *not* that easy of a task." In October, they unleashed *Five Legged Dog*, which included acoustic reworkings of songs from throughout their entire catalog.

> "I think we're probably the biggest DIY band there is. We put the 'D' in DIY: DO." — Osborne

One year later, the indefatigable Melvins surprise-released their latest album, *Bad Mood Rising*, while on the final leg of their 2022 U.S. tour. These days, the trio is fully in sync onstage. McDonald describes the well-known glowering stage presence of Buzzo in his evil-eye garb as "grim disapproval." He laughs. "That's his equivalent of Paul Stanley blowing kisses," says McDonald. "He's a showman and he's been very encouraging for me to flex that muscle as well."

And no matter what wild moves they unveil to celebrate their forthcoming 40th anniversary, it will no doubt be an entertaining, unpredictable experience ... one that only the Melvins could cook up.

OSBORNE AND TOOL'S ADAM JONES – WHO SHOT THE PHOTOS FOR THIS COVER story — have been close friends for years. Even their dogs are related. They met when Tool and the Melvins opened for Bad Religion a few decades back. "He says I was mean to him, which is total bullshit," Osborne says. Tool and the Melvins have occasionally toured together, and Jones has appeared on Melvins tracks. "He sees the viability of my insane playing in a way that some people may not. He understands it on a level that most people that are on the level he's at don't really get."

Floating around the internet is an undated photograph of Osborne, Jones and Patton sharing an intense moment, tipping over the falls together on Disneyland's Splash Mountain ride. At the rear of the canoe is Buzzo, eyes bulging and his black curls streaked with a bolt of gray. In the middle is Jones, in shades and a Motörhead T-shirt, facing the abyss like a man enduring a wind-tunnel test. And up front is Patton, face caught in gnarled mid-scream.

"All Melvins band meetings take place at Disneyland," Patton says. "Adam and I have both been summoned to several Melvins band meetings over the years. Is there anything better than going to a band meeting and getting a pineapple whip and riding Space Mountain? It's the Melvins' way."

After 40 years as a band, the Melvins are still far from the end, operating on instinct and unexpected left turns, facing mosh pits with gray heads vastly outnumbered by newer generations of fans. The lineups change, and there have been personal losses along the way (Cobain, Chris Cornell and more), but the commitment of Osborne and Crover to push forward and stay weird never wavers.

They are a remarkably self-contained operation, and they like it that way. At home, Buzzo's wife Mackie Osborne continues to design all album covers, singles, posters and more, as she has since the mid-Nineties. And the band still maintain a space on the outskirts of Los Angeles that they share with musician-producer-engineer Toshi Kasai. It's where the Melvins rehearse and record without interruption.

"It's a DIY thing. I think we're probably the biggest DIY band there is. We put the 'D' in DIY," Buzzo says with a laugh. "*DO*." Ⓡ

Yq1Poq

The post-genre phenomenon has made a career out of shedding her skin. Her latest transformation has been her most painful – and powerful – experience yet.

TEXT **Emma Madden**

PHOTOGRAPHY **Nick Fancher**

FOR MOST OF HER LIFE, POPPY LIVED WITH A PAIN in her throat. It was a dull pain made duller by the fact it seemed to have no origin and no expiration date. It followed her through adolescence, early adulthood; for years, it showed no sign of going away. She tried to convey her discomfort to those around her, but the cry was chronic — like complaining about the weather on an island that gets 365 days of rain.

A few years ago, she took the pain to a spiritual healer, who finally revealed its source: the pain was the result of not speaking up.

As she retells this story, Poppy lets out a very slight gasp — as though the revelation just jolted her awake, like it was coming to her anew. "Since that conversation, I've aways tried to make a point of speaking up," she says, "under any circumstance."

Speaking today, Poppy's voice is half-throated, slightly timid and bears a very faint Southern drawl from her teenage years living in Nashville. It's the voice of someone braced to answer a series of questions about her life and art from a total stranger. At first, her voice quavers, but it soon settles to a steady frequency. She disguises any apprehension with amicability. She laughs when I laugh. She speaks with consideration and gentleness. She is — in her own graceful way — speaking up.

It's been almost 10 years since the artist, born Moriah Rose Pereira, scored her first record deal with Island Records and became Poppy: a project that's trailed a seesawing narrative of capture and emancipation; silencing and screaming back. Once a standout denizen of surreal YouTube, she's since become a celebrated musician in her own right, leading the 2020s nu-metal resurgence, garnering 100 million-plus streams and views and becoming the first solo female artist nominated for a Best Metal Performance Grammy (for "BLOODMONEY" from 2020's stellar *I Disagree*).

Poppy is currently on a career leveling-up tour, opening for alternative icons Jane's Addiction and Smashing Pumpkins, in support of her powerful new EP, *Stagger* (her first for new label Lava Records/Republic Records). She'd met Billy Corgan and his family for the first time only days prior. "They're very sweet," she tells *Revolver*. Today, she's... Wait, where is she? "That's a good question, let me pull up the map. Harrisonburg, Virginia." Traveling across the States, each night she's bringing Poppy to an entirely new audience, playing in stadiums she used to sneak into with friends as a teenager, earning new fans in real time.

The stage is her own insular universe, but occasionally she'll notice the star-glint of mobile phone flashes from the crowd. "A lot of people don't know about me and then as the set progresses, it's really fun to see more cell phones get lifted up and people getting more into the music," she says. "Opening for such iconic bands, there's a sort of peace. I don't feel like my nerves get in the way. I feel very present and happy to be there."

Today is a day off for the bands. Every day, but especially on tour, Poppy's routine is unwaveringly strict. She wakes at 6 a.m., goes to the gym, practices yoga and prepares for her set. Post-show, she immediately winds down after coming offstage, gets into her pajamas as early as she can, and begins her "sleep technique." What is her sleep technique? "Melatonin," she says. She sleeps well.

Poppy's beginning to eat well, too. She enjoys eating; a relatively new sensation for her. For years, she maintained a vegan diet, but that wrought muscle deficiencies. (Poppy also doesn't like the word "diet," and grasps for another one — "eating technique?") She acknowledges that some might be upset to hear she's no longer vegan: a lifestyle she refers to as a "different kind of discipline," a discipline she found unsustainable. Today, she eats a paleo-leaning "technique."

Now that she's speaking up, she's better able to listen to the needs of her mind, body and spirit. "I think I wasn't very kind to myself for a while," she says. "I've been trying to listen to myself more, whether on the food side of things, in the athletics, in relationships."

Poppy's been on a self-care kick for the past year; ever since she was made to hurtle away from the East Coast back towards Los Angeles following the sudden end of a "very toxic relationship." *Stagger*, her latest EP, was written in the immediate aftermath of this dissolution. It's her most deliberate act of speaking up yet.

Stagger's four songs, which draw from a "musical

HAIR AND MAKEUP: JAIME DIAZ; STYLING: HEATHER PICCHIOTTINO; STYLING ASSISTANT: LUCY SYLVESTER

bed" of trip-hop, prog-rock and riot-grrrl influences, play out like karmic retribution. Across the EP, Poppy casts herself in opposition to someone who "staggers backwards through life" while she progresses; a glutton who fucks and betrays, while she calmly, graciously lives out her truth; an oppressor who tries to confine and miniaturize others, while she lives a life of questioning, curiosity and perpetual expansion. It's also worth noting that while *Stagger* is clearly informed by Poppy's recent "toxic relationship" — it's also a broader, more universal statement that draws from all her relationships with men up to this point, including a much-publicized former partnership with a well-known trap-metal star.

"I realized I was under such a great deal of stress that I was internally dying. My body was rejecting things. It was bad," she says. "There's nothing I did that I regret because I know that I tried my best. And if anything, I was able to dig deeper into myself ... and maybe that's all the relationship was worth. It was a lesson in how to hold your hard-line and get back to yourself."

Poppy, to be sure, has landed back on her feet. Today, her ceaseless curiosity is matched only by her cat Pi, a furless chocolate sphynx, who was born on Christmas Day, 2017, and has recently developed a penchant for yogurt. ("He got into some the other day, it was all over his face.") Pi has been traveling alongside Poppy for almost five years, a firm (possibly evil) confidant and tour companion. He sleeps by Poppy on her tour bus and runs around in the roomy backstage areas. Their next pitstop is Salem, where the two of them will spend Halloween alongside Poppy's family, exploring haunted houses in the area. "I love haunted houses," she says. "My family used to run one."

POPPY WAS BORN IN BOSTON ON THE FIRST DAY OF the year in 1995. She was planned. She doesn't remember her first word. She does, however, remember her first Halloweens. As the youngest of the family, she played the "child role" in her parents' haunted houses. "They were very noisy and very scary," she says, "but we weren't allowed to touch anyone; that would be a violation." When she wasn't acting alongside her siblings in the haunted houses, her mother, a seamstress, would dress her in cutesy costumes. One year she was a loaf of Wonder Bread, the next a firefly, then Waldo, then a roaming gnome.

From a young age, Poppy developed a curiosity for fear. In their haunted houses, her parents had created a living taxonomy of horrors. "Playing off peoples' fears is interesting because some people are afraid of the dentist; some people are afraid of bees, some of blood and needles," she says. "Certain things I laughed at; certain things scared me."

As a child, Poppy's greatest fear was her own voice. "I think I was so afraid of my voice because I was afraid of people looking at me; I didn't think that what I had to say was important."

Scared to take up space, Poppy took up an observer role instead. She didn't have many people who understood her. The friends she did have were older, further along in their "life journey." Being an observer made her an extra-sensitive child, someone more porous to the world. It's a role she still plays today. "I've always taken that position," she says. "In any sort of relationship with people, I tend to take the backseat, to observe ... I want to collect more information before coming to a conclusion."

While we're on the topic, Poppy takes care to point out that being an observer isn't merely a passive role. "I don't want it to be misconstrued with not being a leader," she clarifies. "I would say that I'm a leader as well as an observer. I think that it requires a certain character to be a mesh of both things. One doesn't outweigh the other."

Poppy's role as observer was more pronounced during the first half of her musical career, when she emerged into popular consciousness ashen-haired and waxlike, as a kind of YouTube satirist who reflected the strangeness of the platform back to itself. Her first video, uploaded to her channel in November 2014, was called "Poppy Eats Cotton Candy," and it depicted her doing just that. The following year, she released

"I was under such a great deal of stress that I was internally dying. My body was rejecting things. It was bad."
— Poppy

her most infamous video, "I'm Poppy," in which she repeated that phrase over and over for 10 minutes. This introduction to Poppy was half stupefying, half sublime. It shocked you into the present with sheer boredom. It was made of a sweetness that also suggested a dour and disturbing undertone, like a K-pop star, a David Lynch film or a pack of prank candy. It also inspired an antsy curiosity: Who was Poppy? Where had she come from? What was she trying to do?

The question that dogged Poppy most during this stage of her career was whether she was playing a character. But to ask was to miss the point. Poppy's art not only denaturalized fame — but also life as a human being among other human beings; all the absurd and arbitrary ways in which we try to relate to each other. "Is yours a special voice?" she retorted back to an L.A. news presenter in 2018, who asked whether she put on a voice for the camera. "It kind of is," the presenter said. Like Andy Warhol before her, Poppy was drawing attention to the mundane performance of our daily lives — a performance that only a keen observer could see and appreciate.

Take a purely superficial scan of Poppy's trajectory and you'll see that hair has played a significant, recurring role in her evolution. Hair is Poppy's harbinger of change. In October 2019, she dyed her platinum blonde hair a dark burgundy brown and signed to Sumerian Records (home to the likes of Sleeping With Sirens and Animals as Leaders) — signaling a move away from the deliberately artificial and android musical world of Poppy 1.0, towards the reflective, introspective performance of authenticity that has come to define Poppy 2.0.

"I think as an artist it's your responsibility to change," she says. "I don't think there's anything entirely linear about my project. It's full of zigzags and ups and arounds and loops. I just follow where my curiosity takes me."

Poppy is remarkably strong-spirited: a marauding soul who honors the sharp turns and painful metamorphoses that come with being alive. (Last year's progressive rock and shoegaze-inspired full-length album *Flux* was about exactly that.) In both her life and her art, Poppy will throw herself off the edge of the cliff whenever she experiences a fork in the road. "Sometimes it requires you to break your own heart but then you learn from it," she says. "I think that what I learned more recently is that slowing down is really important and that there isn't really an end goal. It's good to have goals. But if you're trying to get to the end — the end is death, and death is forever. It's important to live right now. It's a fight to do that every day. But I'm learning in real time."

It's one of many lessons that have come from the aftermath of *Stagger*, an EP she wrote as soon as she landed back in L.A.

Immediately after pulling into LAX, she called her

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"It's good to have goals. But if you're trying to get to the end — the end is death, and death is forever. It's important to live right now."
— Poppy

guitarist and producer Ted Gowans. “I said I had to write these songs. We just had to do it.” For a period of two weeks, she’d write and “talk his ear off.” She lifted lyrics straight from a journal, writing her songs like a flare-up. Within the fortnight, Poppy had written 15 songs which detailed “subject matter that I will not return to ever again in my life,” she says. “I wrote out some lessons for myself and hopefully other people can take what I learned and not have to deal with any similar events.”

I ask whether she can say any more about these “events.” She takes a sip of water, swallows awkwardly. “Yes, lightly,” she says. “I was accepting unacceptable things for longer than I should have. I was putting my needs in the background. Ultimately, I tried to save somebody that didn’t want to be saved. It was a hard lesson and I’m glad it’s over and I’m glad the chapter is done.”

Now that Poppy’s recent painful era has concluded, she’s ready to develop into something entirely new. She has transitioned from Sumerian to Republic Records (“not many people can say they’ve had four record deals”) and is working on the full-length follow-up to *Stagger*. She’s also looking ahead to another hair dye-job. On the set for this cover shoot, she considered switching from burgundy to blonde. “We ended up going black for *Revolver*, but we’re right at the cusp of the change that I’ve been planning for a while.”

Poppy reveals little about this upcoming change, only that the new music is “unlike anything I’ve ever done” and that it will “visually fit with the blonde hair color and a turning of a new chapter.” She confirms that a new album will be out sometime in 2023.

In the meantime, she readies herself for another night screaming and speaking up for herself to a crowd of thousands. She takes a breath as our interview comes to an end, sips on her water, clears a throat that is now free of pain. R

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MY LIFE STORY

David Draiman

Disturbed's frontman illuminates the pitfalls and peaks of his divisive, dynamic career

TEXT Eli Enis
PHOTOGRAPHY Travis Shinn

IF ONE WERE TO CREATE A WORD CLOUD OF ALL THE ADJECTIVES EVER USED to describe Disturbed, "divisive" would definitely be in there, written in big, bold letters. To many, the Chicago-born band — whose sales rank them among the most successful rock acts of this century — are a reliable source for high-octane songs that are as headbangingly heavy as they are anthemically catchy. To just as many others, the way their music threads the needle between two contentious genres — stadium-rousing nu-metal and throaty modern hard rock — makes them an easy target for criticism.

The source of their power, and polarity, stems from singer David Draiman, who wields a unique baritone voice that swings between fierce, authoritative bellows and brittle, sentimental croons. He's got a peculiar register, and he's never been afraid to flex it, whether he's howling like a monkey on Disturbed's fitful breakout, "Down With the Sickness," or ambitiously purring one of the prettiest ditties in the American songbook, Simon and Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence."

The latter is their highest-charting song on the Hot 100 (peaking at No. 42) and one of many ecstatic YouTube commenters dubbed it "the greatest cover ever," comparing Draiman's voice to "chiseled marble." Conversely, Disturbed's version of "The Sound of Silence" has a cumulative ranking of 1.26 out of 5 stars on the site rateyourmusic.com, where reviewers call it everything from "overdramatic garbage" to "a nasty slap in my face."

"Divisive" might be underselling it, but that's the word Disturbed chose to title their eighth studio album, which arrived in November 2022 and marked their first full-length in four years. Sure, the moniker was as much a statement about our disharmonic political landscape as it was a cheeky meta comment, but it wasn't like they were treading into uncharted waters.

Draiman's entire life has been typified by division and reconciliation. In his youth, he rebelled against his strict religious upbringing with drugs and rock & roll, creating a rocky relationship with his conservative parents. As an adult, he ditched the corporate "real" world to follow his lifelong dream of becoming a professional musician, and after a decade of reveling and indulging in rock-star excesses, he now lives his life a contented family man.

Whatever you think about Disturbed as a band, going inside Draiman's tumultuous upbringing and long road to personal stability will make you see the frontman differently. Here's his life story.

(below) David Draiman in his early twenties; (right) Draiman, age six

WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU BORN?
DAVID DRAIMAN In Brooklyn, New York, 1973 in Flatbush, to be specific. In Maimonides [Medical Center], to be even more specific.

HOW LONG DID YOU STAY THERE AFTER YOU WERE BORN? Not long. We moved when I was almost three years old, to Chicago.

YOU HAVE A BROTHER AS WELL. HOW OLD IS HE IN RELATION TO YOU? He's about three and a half years younger than me.

WERE YOU GUYS ALWAYS CLOSE? Hmm. [*Laughs awkwardly*]. Yeah, I mean growing up we were close and we're still close. But he lives in Israel and I live in Miami and he's been living there since he was 18 years old. So yeah, distance creates challenges … and we do the best we can.

WHAT ARE YOUR PARENTS LIKE? Traditional. I come from an Orthodox Jewish background, so they're both pretty conservative and didn't really foresee themselves having a son do what I do.

HOW PREVALENT WAS JUDAISM IN YOUR LIFE DURING CHILDHOOD? Oh, it was massive. I went to five different parochial [schools] — well, actually there were four that were parochial boarding and one was a regular non-boarding school — but they were all religious schools for high school. I kept getting thrown out of [them] for one thing or another. Nothing earth-shatteringly terrible.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING? We weren't allowed to talk to girls. I went and talked to girls. It was a boys-only school. I just wanted to do the things a normal teenage kid would do. We sometimes took it a step or two further. I'm sure that nobody exactly encourages a 14-year-old kid to go and smoke weed in the boiler room in the school with a whole bunch of other students.

YEAH, MAYBE NOT. And so since I was that guy, I was the "drug dealer," but I wasn't [dealing drugs]. Or I'd set my buddies up on dates when nobody else knew any girls, and so I was the "pimp" in the school. I mean, stuff like that, it was just exaggerated. It was normal stuff for the most part. But when you're forced to live a very, very restrictive life as an adolescent, it's not an easy thing. You see all the things that everybody else around you has and you want them. And that created a rebellion of sorts.

DID THAT CREATE A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP WITH RELIGION FOR YOU? Oh yeah. And don't get me wrong, I was headed down the path of observance in my own right. I mean, I was about two years away from being ordained as a rabbi before I had a, I don't know what you want to call it, a crisis of conscience, or just awareness. University had a lot to do with me seeing things differently and looking at things differently.

AND I IMAGINE YOUR PARENTS WEREN'T TOO FOND OF THAT? No, no, they were not. After university, I had intended to go into law and my whole education was set up as pre-law. I had gotten into a bunch of different law schools, was ready

COURTESY OF DAVID DRAIMAN

"I had a little moment of clarity and woke up underneath a car on New Year's Eve, my 18th year of life. No shirt, no shoes, no wallet, just my jeans, freezing to death."
— David Draiman

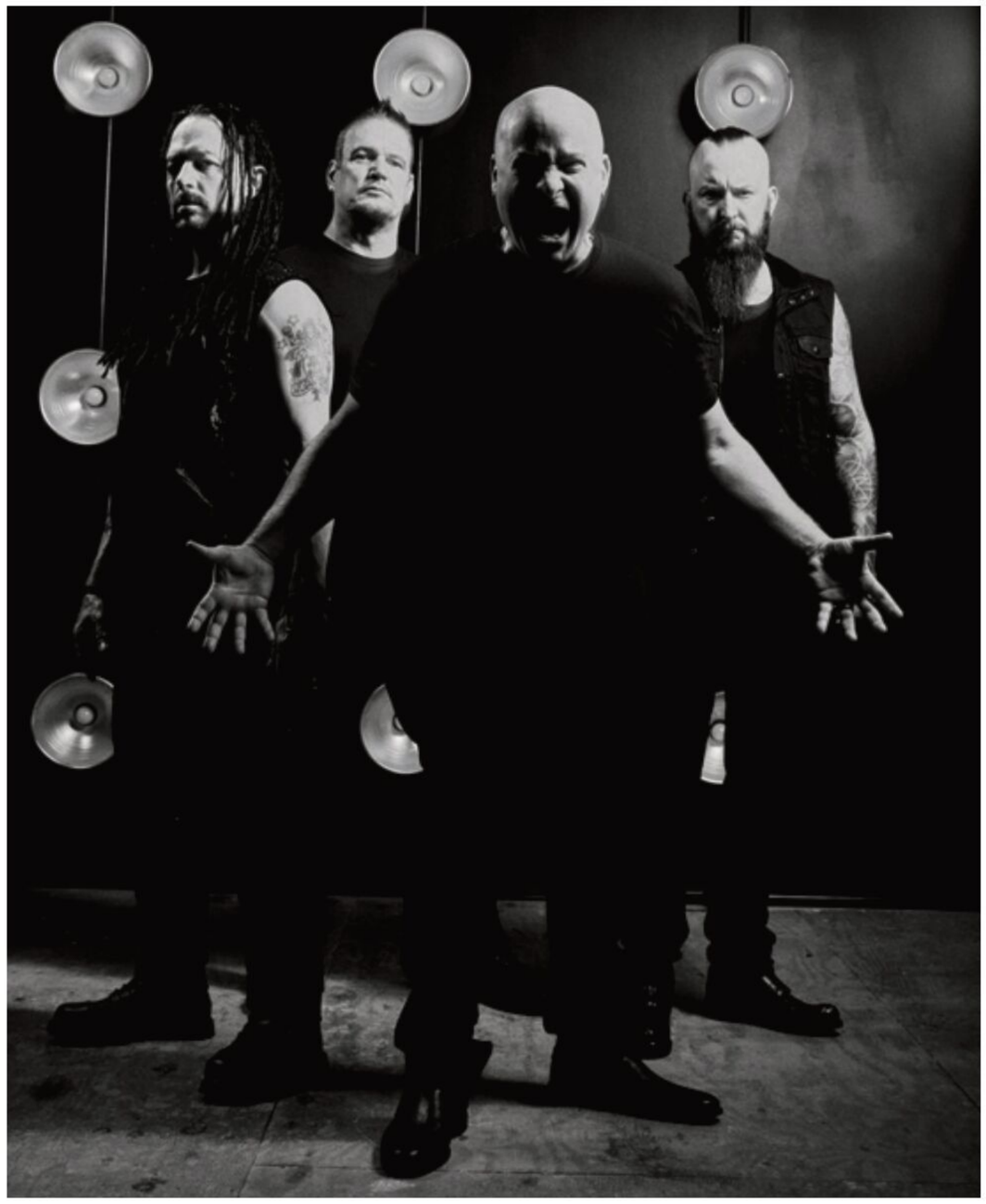
to go and had a literal crisis of conscience. Just because the only law that interested me was criminal defense and I just couldn't come to terms with defending people I knew were guilty.

So I decided not to pursue law. One of my degrees was in business administration, and I had a colleague of mine that was in healthcare and he told me about an opening for an assistant administrator position at a long-term care facility. And a year or two later I had my own administrator's license and was running healthcare facilities. And I had done that successfully for about five, six years — all while still having Disturbed in the background.

THIS WAS BEFORE *THE SICKNESS*, RIGHT? Yeah, pre-*The Sickness*. And so I left a successful administrator's job. Six-figure salary, company car, company phone, company pager back in those days. And so leaving that to go try and be a rock star, my parents thought I was nuts. It created quite a rift at the time.

I IMAGINE YOU HAD THIS CREATIVE SPARK IN YOU SINCE YOU WERE YOUNG. WHEN DID THAT FIRST EMERGE? Oh, since I was a little boy I was always singing. Part of Jewish culture is that during Sabbath holidays at our meals, there's what are referred to in Hebrew as *Zemirot*, [which] are traditional songs that are sung during these ritual meals. And my grandfather and my father, I'd enjoy singing with them. That led to choir and cantorial training. And in my early teens, I was already leading High Holiday services.

SO YOU WERE TRAINED IN MUSIC LINKED WITH RELIGION. DID YOU SEE THAT



Divisive Track x Track

Guitarist **Dan Donegan** tells the stories behind each song on Disturbed's new album

1. "HEY YOU"
In fall 2021, we did a handful of shows and had a day off in Fort Myers, Florida. We popped in to work with our friend Dave Fortman, who produced a lot of big albums with Evanescence, Slipknot and Godsmack. I said, "Let's find a cool groove ... and let me improvise." Almost instantly the riff came out ... I started looping it, we locked in the drums and David [Draiman] started scatting over a melody. "Hey you" was a natural reaction, the first two words that popped out of his mouth, and it felt like a big hit hook.

2. "BAD MAN"
Another improvised moment. When we [went] to Nashville to record, I was so inspired being back in the room with our new producer Drew Fulk. I said, "Throw a beat at me that's aggressive and straightforward, just driving." I wrote the riff and we ran with it. It's so syncopated and David [started] scatting the melody and those two words came out: "Bad man," which were a bit inspired by world events that were happening and on his mind.

(below) Disturbed promotional photo, circa late-Nineties; (right) "My son Sam and I goofing around. He had to have been around a year and a half old"; (opposite page) Draiman with his dog Lisa. "She was my constant companion for the seven and a half years she was on this earth. Dog of a lifetime."

AS YOUR PATH, OR DID YOU ALWAYS KNOW YOU WANTED TO BREAK THE TWO APART? I think it was buying my first record, which I did when I was about 10 years old. And it was KISS' *Destroyer*. That was the beginning of my path. Hearing the other side and seeing that there were other things. I got really into punk rock and new wave and was really into stuff like the Sex Pistols and Depeche Mode and the Smiths and the Cure. I still enjoyed hard rock and heavy metal as well, but not as much, to be honest, at the time. My first band was a punk-rock band.

HOW OLD WERE YOU IN YOUR FIRST BAND? Fourteen.

WERE YOU DOING THAT IN SECRET FROM YOUR FAMILY? Oh yeah, everything was in secret.

HOW'D YOU GET AWAY WITH ALL THAT? Oh, well I got away with so much. That's the tip of the iceberg or what I got away with.

WELL, TAKE ME A LITTLE BIT FURTHER DOWN THE ICEBERG. Well, like I told you, I was doing things that I wasn't allowed to do in school. I was dating non-Jewish girls, which is a big problem for a traditional Jewish family. I had gotten involved with a college girl during my freshman or sophomore year, and she had a really nasty drug habit. She was a heroin addict; she got me addicted. She was the one that I wrote "Inside the Fire" about, off of *Indestructible*.

That was some heavy baggage as an adolescent to deal with. Your girlfriend committing suicide, that was a rough patch. Yeah, that stuff haunted me into my thirties, I would say. Still something I kind of carry a little bit of.

But yeah, in terms of getting away with stuff, I mean, my parents, and my mother in particular, they're still in a state of denial. They don't want to accept the fact that, Oh my God, he did this, he went through this, he had to deal with this. I think that there's some convenient horse blinders on so to speak. But thank God I survived it. I think that's part of the reason why as a professional musician I never really got dragged into the drug scene, per se. Because I had my time during my teens.

WHAT EVENTUALLY GOT YOU OUT OF THE DRUG SCENE? It kind of came to a head by the time I was 18 years old, and I had a little moment of clarity and woke up underneath a car on New Year's Eve, my 18th year of life. No shirt, no shoes, no wallet, just my jeans, freezing to death. And I happened to know a buddy of mine that lived a couple blocks away and stumbled to his door and collapsed.

And my parents were looking for me for a couple days, still in denial after that. I was sick for three months going through withdrawal, coming off of everything. But that was the last time I touched anything heavy. And then for seven years I didn't touch anything at all. I didn't even smoke.

DID YOU HAVE ANYONE TO TURN TO AT THAT POINT FOR ADVICE WHEN YOU WERE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION? No. I didn't. Very lonely. Very, very isolated at the time. Tough time. It took several rounds of therapy to come to terms with all that shit.

MOST PEOPLE KNOW DISTURBED BECAUSE OF "DOWN WITH THE SICKNESS," AND IN THAT SONG THERE'S THE PART WHERE YOU'RE ACTING OUT A BOY BEING ABUSED BY HIS MOTHER. WAS THAT INFORMED BY AN EXPERIENCE

COURTESY OF DAVID DRAIMAN

YOU HAD? No, no, no. A lot of people don't understand it. It was meant to be an analogy. That's back during *The Sickness* era, our songwriting entity we referred to as Mother Culture Publishing. [That song passage is] the mother culture of society beating the child, yearning for individuality, into submission. In certain ways it was even reflective of how I felt being forced to be something that I wasn't. But yeah, it wasn't meant to be taken literally.

And I mean, don't get me wrong, it's not like my parents exactly spared the rod and spoiled the child. I got my smacks every once in a while. I probably deserved some of them. So, I mean, it is what it is. But was I abused? No, I wasn't abused.

WHEN YOU GOT BEYOND YOUR DRUG ADDICTION, WHERE DID YOU WANT TO GO IN LIFE? I always wanted to be a musician. It's in my high school yearbook. "What do I want to do?" Back then in the yearbook, it says I wanted to be an alternative rock musician.

OH, INTERESTING. Yeah. Disturbed wasn't necessarily in the cards at the time. Everything that I was doing up until that point was more Faith No More, Red Hot Chili Peppers, more funk influenced, you know what I mean? Wasn't as heavy as we ended up becoming.

SO, YOU EVENTUALLY GO TO COLLEGE. WERE MUSIC AND YOUR STUDIES YOUR MAIN FOCUS? DID YOU JOIN ANY CLUBS OR FRATERNITIES? I wasn't really immersed in that environment, to be honest. I mean, that was part of the reason why I chose to go to Loyola [University Chicago]. It was a commuter campus. I didn't have to be in the fraternity/sorority life. I really didn't want any part of it.

COURTESY OF DAVID DRAIMAN

3. "DIVISIVE"
"Divisive" [focuses] on those in power that pit us against one another and the division that it creates. We've gone down this social-media rabbit hole of hatred and attacking; it's become an addiction for people. [This] is us having a wake-up call, trying to find common ground. Rock shows and music do it for us; it's therapeutic. It doesn't matter what color or religion you are or what side of the fence you fall politically. Music makes you forget those differences and realize that we have more in common than we give ourselves credit for.

4. "UNSTOPPABLE"
The riff is just straight-up in-your-face and the tempo makes you feel like putting your foot on the gas pedal and flying down the highway. Every album we want a big fight-song anthem. And that's what "Unstoppable" is for this album. It gives you that powerful feeling, like a bit invincible and unstoppable. We always like to try to have those uplifting, encouraging songs.

5. "LOVE TO HATE"
"Love to Hate" continues the theme of division. We just *love* to hate and attack each other. There's so many of us guilty of that. But … we try to spin things in a positive way, too. This is supposed to be the *United States* and obviously we don't feel so united these past few years. But instead of complaining about it, [let's] try to step back and recognize we're better than this.

6. "FEEDING THE FIRE"
With streaming, a lot of people are going to Spotify and not listening to an album like we did when we were kids: putting it on first song to the last. But for those fans that do still listen in sequenced order, "Feeding the Fire" feels like a good bridge going from the more in-your-face "Unstoppable" and "Love to Hate." It's still a heavy riff but [with] a little bit more vibe, which [leads] into "Don't Tell Me," the power ballad that follows.

7. "DON'T TELL ME"
A few years back [Heart singer] Ann Wilson tweeted about being inspired by Disturbed's "The Sound of Silence." … I'm like, Oh my gosh, she knows who we are! David and Ann had spoken through social media … and he reached out. She responded that she would love to sing this duet. I remember sitting in the control room watching her and David work out the harmonies, like, *wow*. I felt like a little kid. After she left I'm like, Holy fuck, did that just happen? [*Laughs*] It was such a cool, special moment to have a legend like her be part of this.

8. "TAKE BACK YOUR LIFE"
Being from Chicago, we were big fans of Ministry and that Nineties industrial scene. Early in our career I was experimenting with a sequencer, trying stuff, [which] ended up in songs like "Stupify" and "The Game" off *The Sickness.* That was a big reason why this time I sought out Drew Fulk, because I really liked what he was doing electronically and bringing that modern vibe to our signature guitar riffs, syncopated drums and animalistic David. It was cool to have him lend ideas to some electronic elements, like the beginning of "Take Back Your Life."

9. "PART OF ME"
I had that opening riff when we were in Fort Myers with Dave Fortman, and I was sitting on that for a while. That main riff is simple and driving, but still has kind of an industrial vibe. I remember writing that bridge portion: I knew I wanted that longer extended buildup into the final chorus. That was all improvised in the moment.

10. "WON'T BACK DOWN"
We wrote this crammed in a tiny bedroom at Dave Fortman's condo. Mike [Wengren], our drummer, was playing a little electronic drum kit. I grabbed a guitar [off] the wall and David was scatting melodies. It felt like the old-school days of buddies getting together and improvising. It's another fight song that's melodic at times and has those live [sing-along ready] moments with those chants. This track just felt like a good way to end the album. Ⓡ

Disturbed, (from left) John Moyer, Dan Donegan, Draiman and Mike Wengren

"We're the kind of band that people either really, really love or really, really hate. There's not a whole lot of in-between."
— Draiman

Because at the time I was still an observer and I just wanted to go there and do what I needed to do to get my degree and move on. I was doing 20 to 30 credit hours a semester, plus summers. I got three BA's in three and a half years.

SO YOU DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR A FRAT HOUSE. No, I didn't have any time like that. During college, it was me trying to form my own band and trying to audition for other bands. And forming your own band is very, very difficult because as you probably already know, musicians can tend to be pretty flaky people. So it was challenging, but the love of music never left me. It was after college, once I finally was in the workforce and was an administrator already, that's when I went to audition for the Disturbed guys.

EVENTUALLY DISTURBED GET SIGNED. YOU PUT OUT THIS FIRST RECORD AND IT'S A HUGE SMASH. YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO'D ALREADY SEEN A LOT AND BATTLED ADDICTION. HOW DID YOU NAVIGATE THIS INDUSTRY THAT YOU WERE LAUNCHED INTO WHERE DRUGS AND SEX RUN RAMPANT? Trial by fire, right? I mean, you're in it and you're kind of surrounded by it — *if* you decide to be someone who's social out there and, in the beginning, I definitely was. I was all over the goddamn place. For many [people] it was more about drinking, at least in our camp anyway. My guys still drink like most people probably don't ever even [attempt].

DO YOU STILL DRINK? Yeah. I've never been a big drinker. Never been my thing. It's always been a means to an end. I'd be drinking socially. I never enjoyed feeling drunk. I never enjoyed the aftereffects and being hungover. [But] earlier in my career I would get stupid with everybody.

IN THE 2000S, DISTURBED IS HUGE AND YOU'RE RACKING UP ALL THESE NO. 1 ALBUMS. WHAT'S YOUR LIFE LIKE LOOK LIKE OUTSIDE OF THE BAND? I was crazy. I was nuts. Big womanizer.

THE "PIMPING" FROM HIGH SCHOOL CONTINUED? Well, then it [became] accentuated by these new Jedi powers that the rock star gives you. It's a whole 'nother level. It was a lot of fun, my 2000s were pretty nuts. I used to jump back and forth [between] a house I had in Chicago and a house in L.A.

WHEN DID YOU GET THE LABRET PIERCINGS? There were two things I did once I quit my job. Once I knew that we had a record deal coming, I shaved my head and I did the double labret. And yeah, I just wanted to do something that was original that nobody else had.

HOW DID YOUR PARENTS REACT? It took them a while before they saw it … and my mom cried. They were not happy.

TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU MET YOUR WIFE. Well, I originally met her during our "Prayer" music video shoot around 2002. She was dating one of the other actors in the video who was friends with the co-director. So she came on set to say hi. And I was instantly just smitten, a big no-no for me to be lusting after her because I was friends with her boyfriend. … She came to the next shoot and then we didn't see each other for seven years. And once I decided to finally make a Facebook page, I found her on somebody's page, and I asked her to "friend" me. And she didn't believe it was me.

FAIR ENOUGH. Because I had a thousand imposters on there. And she's like, "If this is really who I think it is, tell me the significance of downtown L.A. circa 2001, 2002." I'm like, "My 'Prayer' music video shoot where we met." And she said, OK. She was a WWE Diva at the time. … I called her and I'm like, "Look, I have a show coming up in Chicago. Let me fly you out, no strings attached. Come hang out, invite a friend with you so [there's] no pressure. And if the vibe is cool, hang out for a day or two. If not, then consider it an all-expense paid trip to visit your friends

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in Chicago." She accepted and came out to the show and yeah, that was the beginning of our relationship.

I IMAGINE YOU TWO HAVE HAD PRETTY DIFFERENT LIVES. WHAT BONDS YOU AS PEOPLE? Ironically, her understanding of the entertainment world made it easy. A lot of other girls didn't have a real concept of it and had jealousy issues. It's daunting dating a rock star and there's all these rumors, but she came from the WWE. She was used to the rumor mill. … But what bonds us together is our love for each other more than anything else. It's not like we're opposites attract — we had a bunch of things in common — but we're definitely our own people. She did not marry me because she's a big superfan of my music. [*Laughs*]

[*LAUGHS*] NO? She likes it, but she prefers more dance stuff, more hip-hop stuff and it's all good. And in fact, I think the fact that she liked me — not because of what I do, but in spite of what I do — is a big part of what made it work.

YOU'VE BEEN A FATHER FOR NINE YEARS NOW, RIGHT? GIVEN WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH AS A KID — YOUR EXPERIENCES, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS — HOW HAS THAT INFORMED YOUR APPROACH TO PARENTING? Not forcing anything on him, just making him aware of little aspects of his heritage. I'm very, very open-minded with my son. I try to be a stable element in his life and be someone he can talk to and shoulder to cry on if he needs to. And try and impart to him whatever wisdom I might have. And just be a balancing agent for him more than anything else.

DISTURBED'S MUSIC IS SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ROCK MUSIC OF THE 21ST CENTURY. YOU'VE SHARED THE STAGE WITH SO MANY GREAT MUSICIANS. DO YOU EVER STRUGGLE WITH IMPOSTER SYNDROME AT ALL? I worry. Being honest: I worry about how I'll be remembered after all of this.

WHAT WORRIES YOU ABOUT THAT? I don't know. You spend 20, 25 years trying to make something that lasts after you're gone. Music is an amazing pathway to immortality. But yeah, I worry. I hope that people can at least still draw inspiration and strength and motivation from what we've created. And hopefully not too many people think I'm a prick. I hope I've left a good impression on enough people that, for the most part, people look back at what I've done positively, I guess.

THE NEW DISTURBED ALBUM IS CALLED *DIVISIVE*. DID YOU NAME IT THAT BECAUSE YOU THINK THE BAND, OR EVEN YOU AS A PERSON, ARE DIVISIVE? That's a part of it [because] I think that we're the kind of band that people either really, really love or really, really hate. There's not a whole lot of in-between, right?

YEAH. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS? I think that anything that's worth feeling passionate about brings extremes of polarity to it. The art that should disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed, right? I've definitely figured out how to come to peace with it. I like the fact that people are passionate one way or the other about what we do. As opposed to just being like, Oh yeah, I think I've heard of them or … No, I'd rather they feel passionate one way or the other as opposed to being lukewarm.

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AVATAR

IN FLAMES

Two Gothenburg metal icons, **Johannes Eckerström** and **Anders Fridén**, sit down for a fascinating conversation about shared heroes, divergent paths and their desire to “create waves” for future generations

"I AM SUPER PROUD THAT SO MANY BANDS FROM GOTHENBURG ARE STILL OUT IN THE WORLD AND creating," says In Flames frontman Anders Fridén. "Even though we all started with something called 'metal,' we've all taken different paths."

In Flames, of course, are veterans of the mid-Nineties Gothenburg, Sweden, scene — which included At the Gates and Dark Tranquillity — that defined, exported and popularized what we now know as melodic death metal. But the influence of In Flames and their cohorts extends well beyond their metallic subgenre — as Avatar singer Johannes Eckerström can attest.

"In Flames were showing the way for us when we were growing up in the Gothenburg area," Eckerström explains. "In our case, geographically, we had many bands around. But I think In Flames were the number one band to show us: You can be from *here* and make it."

Born a little over a decade apart, Fridén and Eckerström have much different memories of, and experiences with, the Gothenburg music scene, and no metal fan would ever confuse Avatar's theatrical heavy-metal epics with In Flames' exquisitely forged melodeath assaults. And yet, the two bands retain a powerful bond between them.

"In Flames and Avatar, we have that connection, even though it's been a while since we toured together or hung out or even saw each other," Fridén explains. "It is a camaraderie and mutual respect that exists without having to hold hands and talk every fucking day. [*Laughs*] Every time I see their name out there, I feel really proud; because while we don't sound the same, we definitely come from the same place and the same 'bowl of riffs,' or whatever you want to call it."

Avatar have been active for two decades, and In Flames for three — yet both bands sound as vital and inspired as ever on their forthcoming new albums. In Flames 14th and latest, *Foregone* (which drops February 10th), is being hailed as a melodeth return to form, hearkening back to classic work like 1996's genre-defining *The Jester Race* after a run of albums that dipped more into alt-metal territory. Meanwhile, Avatar's ninth album, *Dance Devil Dance* (which arrives February 17th), ditches the more conceptual leanings of their last few records in favor of an anthemic, go-for-the-jugular approach.

As both bands prepare to hit the road in support of their latest efforts, we thought this would be the perfect time to reunite Fridén and Eckerström via Zoom. What resulted was a fascinating discussion of these Gothenburgers' artistic journeys: from shared musical roots and life-changing shows to the importance of making boundary-pushing art that creates "waves for the future." Read that illuminating conversation, which has been edited for length and clarity, in the pages that follow.

JOHANNES ECKERSTRÖM I think I can start this, though I will probably make Anders uncomfortable with the amount of praise I can spew over In Flames. [*Laughs*] We're both from the Gothenburg area, but we're talking Lindome and Billdal, which are even better places to grow up in than the actual city. We are suburb kids…

In our lives and musically, In Flames have been a very, very big deal. My first introduction [to them] was through my older brother with [2000's] *Clayman*. I already had been listening to more traditional heavy metal, the more melodic stuff, power metal and … had also gotten introduced to more extreme metal by older, cooler friends: Immolation, Atheist and whatnot. Hearing In Flames bridged that gap. They were like the missing link, showing one way you can put all the things you like together. Melodic death metal — that's where it all came together for us in Avatar.

The short list of the most important influences from where our songwriting started would be four bands: Fellow Gothenburgers the Haunted, Iron Maiden, Cryptopsy and In Flames. My first audition for Avatar was screaming "Clay Man" into a microphone connected to a little guitar practice amp … And one of our first big opportunities … was a Scandinavian tour opening for them. I don't think we were ready to truly capitalize on it for ourselves, but we got a little bit of a swim in the deep end of the pond, playing for big audiences and just having a great time. So yeah, In Flames have meant so much for us in a multitude of ways. What did we mean for *you*, Anders? [*Laughs*]

ANDERS FRIDÉN Ha! Thank you. It means a lot to hear it, because it's the same as how other bands were extremely important to us. Like, when we saw that Entombed got a record deal [for 1990's] *Left Hand Path*. And if we're talking Gothenburg, when we saw At the Gates gaining traction, and then all of a sudden we had record labels interested in what *we* do. Gothenburg is not a big city, and when we started it was such a small scene. We were only a few dudes that were doing this. You mentioned Immolation — I don't know if you saw them when they played at [Gothenburg underground club] Valvet…

ECKERSTRÖM No, Valvet is before my time.

FRIDÉN When they played Valvet it was to like 150 people, but that place was so important to the Gothenburg scene. So when I look at what we have done, it's not about a single song or a single album … it's more like *we made a mark*. We did something with our music and traveled the world. And you guys and the people after you and after them, that's the same thing. This is how we continue to explore and create this music — and if we can create waves for the future, it's awesome.

ECKERSTRÖM Exactly. … I think we are just slightly over a decade in age difference between us. I imagine that the idea of what Gothenburg was growing up, in terms of the music scene, was quite different for you than for me. I don't even know if you would have thought, Yeah, we're a *scene*, when you and your friends hung out and your bands were trading members?

FRIDÉN Oh, we had no idea until journalists started asking us about it, or they put the tag on it. This is pre-internet, so news didn't travel as fast; and we had no idea what we were doing. Like you said, we were just blending styles, and all of a sudden *this* comes out. And of course, you are hanging out with your buddies, and you borrow or steal from each other and it all ends up being sort of similar. But I think with all the Gothenburg bands, we all have a unique style.

ECKERSTRÖM Exactly. All these bands have always looked for a way to do something different. I think the environment that grows around people can be either that — or the opposite, where it becomes very conservative, like, "OK, *this* is the thing that metal is supposed to be, now and forever." The bands from our environment evolved and changed a lot … which at the time became a source of debates. But I think for us it was for the better. In our world, [In Flames' 2002 album] *Reroute to Remain* was such a huge change: You sang a couple of extra notes in some choruses and … Was that allowed? [*Laughs*] It was the subject of major discussions …

A pivotal concert for us was Kåren [a club in Gothenburg] when Soilwork opened for you. It was a lesson learned in like, you know, evolving is not only fine and OK, but necessary and important. There's no point in pretending to be 20 and write an album like a 20-year-old when you're sitting at a different place in life.

FRIDÉN It's even impossible to do it, because you're not being true to yourself. That's the main thing — just stay true to yourself. Of course, if you have a long career, things will certainly change. I don't want to do the same thing again and again. No, I want to move forward. I want challenges. I want to, you know, give listeners something to debate. [*Laughs*] And that's fine. When you create an album and give it to the public, it's open for debates. If I'm satisfied with the album, it doesn't bother me.

ECKERSTRÖM When we truly had grown enough as people to say, "Hey, *we* like it; it's OK if everyone hates it. We can go home!" [*Laughs*] That became a recipe for better music.

FRIDÉN I think people will see through it if you're not true to yourself. But something we can't forget here, and which I can't stress enough, is also that you guys wouldn't be where you are today — or us — if not for working really hard and being out there touring and really fighting … That's why the pandemic was really hard, at least for me. … My whole grown-up life I've been out touring and recording and touring. … So that was really hard. But that's another story.

REVOLVER LOOKING BACK, WHAT WAS IT THAT FIRST MADE EACH OF YOU SAY, "I WANT TO DO MUSIC"?

FRIDÉN Well, we were just a bunch of friends from the same neighborhoods south of Gothenburg that started listening to heavy metal. I was 10 years old when I got into hard-rock music, you know, and then I wanted something heavier. [*Laughs*] And it grew into thrash and death and grind; you wanted something that was more extreme all the time. And as you grow older and were able to go to shows … then you wanna be part of a scene yourself. You're like, "Let's form a band! Let's do it!" You take your baby steps. It sounds horrible at first, but whatever; you have to go through that. … Back in that era with metal, it felt like you could do whatever; like, just go crazy! And then it was later in life that I realized, Oh, there's so many rules. You can't be *this*, or you can't do *that*… But I really fell in love with heavy metal because I thought it was such an open genre.

ECKERSTRÖM Metal really came into my life when I was 12. I have an older brother, and there was the pivotal moment of borrowing [Helloween's] *Keeper of the Seven Keys, Part II* from him, and then I stopped cutting my hair around that time. But musically, I had been put in front of a piano by my parents when I was five. I had gravitated towards music in general my whole childhood. But with metal it was exactly that journey: You hear someone [sing] "WAAAAAAA!!!" and then a while later you hear someone [scream] "AGGGGHHHH!!!" and it's like, "Oh, *this* is where I live!" [*Laughs*]

Anders, I've seen you mention it, and I know Mikael Åkerfeldt of Opeth has talked about it, too. And I've spoken to a couple of other people about how when you old-timers — if I may [*Laughs*] — were starting out, Swedish television late one night aired the [1983] Dortmund Festival from Germany. It was like Iron Maiden,

Avatar, (from left) Jonas Jarlsby, Tim Öhrström, Johannes Eckerström, Henrik Sandelin and John Alfredsson

"IN FLAMES WERE THE MISSING LINK. MELODIC DEATH METAL IS WHERE

Priest, Michael Schenker Group, Krokus and stuff. And *everybody* from Sweden who later played in bands remembers sitting up late or taping that concert and being shaped by that. I am so fascinated by that.

FRIDÉN It was such an important show. That's where I heard Scorpions for the first time; Def Leppard, Krokus, MSG, Ozzy, who else? Iron Maiden, of course. I think a friend of mine taped it for me on VHS. You can still find it on YouTube, at least parts of it, but this was a key building block in the Swedish metal evolution. … I kind of miss those days when everything felt completely new. The first time I heard Kreator, I was like, "What the fuck is *this*? I don't know if I like it, but I think I do and I want to hear more!" Back then me and the drummer from Dark Tranquillity always traded tapes. The first time we heard Death it was like, "Oh no, this *can't* be done by humans. This is like a computer!" [*Laughs*] It was so, so far-off anything that we heard. It wasn't love at first, but it was *extremely* intriguing.

ECKERSTRÖM I don't know if it sounds pretentious, but in order to do to metal what metal has done to us, you wanna *try* to do something new and add to the conversation. There has already been so much amazing metal in each era — but I also have to remind myself that there was a time when *British Steel* was brand new and sounded like nothing else. So my Judas Priest fandom *demands* of me to at least have the ambition to [try] something that feels cutting edge.

For our music to actually feel like metal to me, we don't let the pedals or the equipment do too much heavy lifting. There needs to be a *physical* aspect to what we do. It has to hurt the back a little bit to sing. [*Laughs*] You don't want so much distortion that you don't really need to beat the shit out of the guitar to create that sound. We need to have a sound that *requires* some hard hitting to it.

FRIDÉN Yeah, we're not trying to play the fastest or the heaviest … [but] it has to *feel* right, that's the important thing. [Making an album] is a very organic process. [Guitarist] Björn [Gelotte] and me are the main songwriters and when we write together I feed off his energy and vice versa. … I hate coming back to the pandemic, but all the frustration and anger, and the feeling of being away from your family, friends, fans and the group of people that you travel the world with … we poured that into this new album. And I don't wanna take away anything from anyone whose been in In Flames before, but obviously the band sounds a little bit different today, because it's a different constellation of people …

ECKERSTRÖM As it has to — like, in your case, having gone through these [line-up] changes as of late. … It has to be allowed to change with the people, the new contributors.

In Flames, (from left) Bryce Paul, Chris Broderick, Björn Gelotte, Anders Fridén and Tanner Wayne

IT ALL CAME TOGETHER FOR US IN AVATAR."– JOHANNES ECKERSTRÖM

FRIDÉN Yeah, I don't think it's fair to other people to tell them, "OK, you have to act exactly like the person before you." Our drummer [Tanner Wayne], he's a racehorse — let him run, you know? … And obviously having Chris Broderick now in the band, too — he's an amazing guitar player, so you don't tell him to just play power chords. I mean, that would be stupid. [*Laughs*]

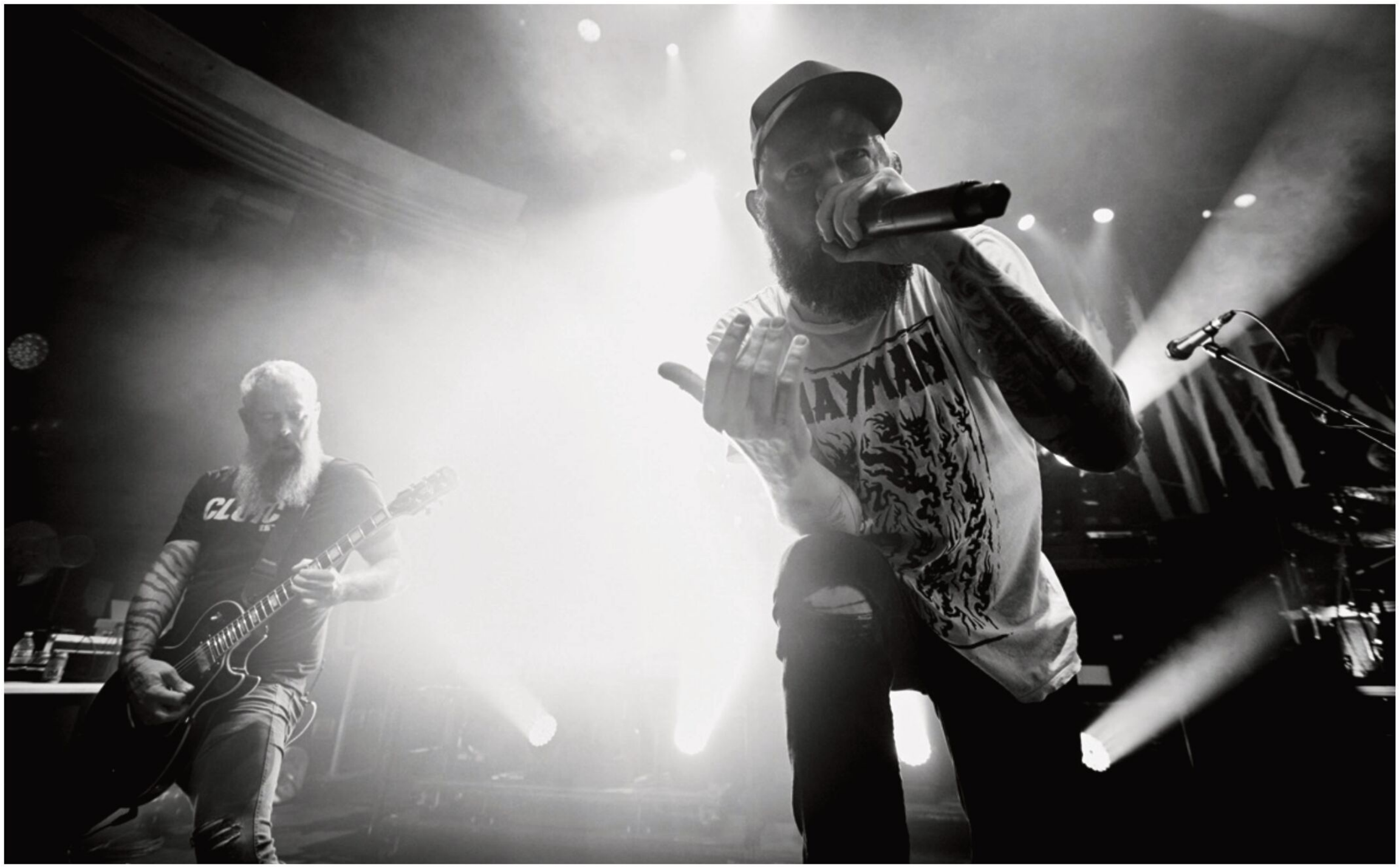
ECKERSTRÖM The writing for our album started in the midst of the pandemic, and I think for the band collectively it was a tougher engine to start. I personally started to play this game with myself where it was like, "Oh, we have all this time. I can finally do something else." I created a little folder in the computer called Solo, and I allowed myself to put more ideas into that one. But then a weird thing happened: As soon as I started to feel good in there … the four other [Avatar] guys were the first ones that I couldn't wait to show it to and ask them, "Hey, what do *you* guys think?" I kind of tried to sidetrack myself … but it fell [back] into the Avatar thing. When we finally recorded the album, last spring, we went to my family's cabin and rebuilt an extra house there on the property into a studio with rented equipment. It was just the five of us and Jay Ruston, the producer, together for most of it, which was amazing.

The time before that [for 2020's *Hunter Gatherer*], we went to L.A. to an amazing studio, Sphere Studios. … But as great as that was, when you have all these high-tech, top-notch options, it's hard not to go for them. I wondered if we, at least on an emotional level, lost a bit of grit and dirt doing it like that. So with this album it was like, "Let's take the risk and record it in a way that is more challenging technically." Then it just so happened that because the house doesn't stand on a real foundation, the tiny room we put the drums in sounded 10 times bigger; the building shook and it helped the low end somehow. [*Laughs*] So it ended up sounding as great as anything.

FRIDÉN Is that house still a studio?

EKERSTRÖM No, it's a three-bedroom little house. We just rented the studio equipment from Crehate Studio outside of Gothenburg, and moved all the stuff into it.

FRIDÉN That's very cool. I really like that idea: It happens there and then, and you cannot recreate it. You capture a moment of time … like a photograph. We've done it that way, as well. This was the third time we did the L.A. experience. I do love going there because we have all these friends around, and you work like 24-7 with music and you don't have the distractions from … don't get me wrong, I love my family, but I want to live and breathe the music when I create the music. It's *that* important; I don't wanna have any distractions. … We rent a house, me and Björn,



"WE CREATED A SOUND THAT TRAVELED THE WORLD FROM THE SUBURBS OF GOTHENBURG. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?" – ANDERS FRIDÉN

and we go there because I live in Stockholm and he lives in Gothenburg, so we don't really see each other when we're home. And then we build a small demo studio in the house, and as soon music is done, we go to [producer] Howard Benson's studio and we record the songs that we have.

EKERSTRÖM L.A. is a cool place for recording because the entertainment industries, including the music industry, have made such a mark on the city. You meet way more people throughout a day when you're there that make you feel legitimized, I guess, about doing what you do. It makes it real, somehow. I did enjoy it! [*Laughs*]

FRIDÉN Also, you can't forget that we get away from Sweden in that time of year which is usually cold and rainy and wet — and you can go to L.A. and wear shorts. [*Laughs*]

EKERSTRÖM Yeah. Shorts are good for the recording process. [*Laughs*]

REVOLVER WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, WHAT SORT OF LEGACY DO YOU THINK YOUR BANDS WILL HAVE LEFT ON METAL?

EKERSTRÖM I think it's not for us to say. Like, I think I can tell you more about In Flames' mark on metal than Anders can. Because I went out and bought the albums, you know? He only made them; he has no idea. [*Laughs*] In our case, I just hope that the time, money and energy that people spend on us — the emotion that they put towards us — they will feel that it's been worthwhile.

FRIDÉN To talk about you guys from an outside perspective, definitely something that you should be proud of is that you have a sound that's *yours*. When people listen to you, they will say "This is Avatar." They don't have to guess and get it on, like, their fifth guess.

EKERSTRÖM That's cool. Thank you!

FRIDÉN And then I think the same for us — at the end of the day we created a sound that traveled the world from the suburbs of Gothenburg. ... Like, how is that possible, you know? It makes me proud when I see a mom or dad bring their kids to the show. We will be the introduction for them as Scorpions or Kreator or Death was for me. And they will go, "Oh, it's possible," and they will create a band and get into music. Music gave me so much; it can't be overstated. So if we leave something for the next generation, that makes me happier than a No. 1 album or whatever, you know what I mean? Ⓡ

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Tim Henson

Polyphia's super-shredder shares the personal stories behind his prized possessions

TEXT **John Hill** PHOTOGRAPHY **Aarron Anderson**

POLYPHIA MASTERMIND AND LEAD GUITARIST TIM HENSON IS ALL about vibes. I mean, look at him. He's crafted a meticulous post-modern personal aesthetic: full-blast black-and-grey neck, arm and hand tattoos, killer retro-future mullet, and a streetwear-meets-loungewear-meets-cult leader wardrobe. Henson is equally slick at creating eclectic, out-of-this world musical moments and building riff-heavy tracks that have as much in common with hip-hop production as they do with heavy metal.

Those apex-level skills are on full display throughout Polyphia's new album, *Remember That You Will Die*, which finds the virtuosic band upping their already mind-blowing instrumental game to exciting new levels as they run the gamut of moods and genres, from the funk-filled "Reverie" to the trippy "Neurotica." Mindfulness is at the core of all of Henson's expressions. He is clearly *able* to rip an insane, face-melting solo at a moment's notice, but conscientious enough to never allow his technical proficiency to get in the way of a track's overall needs. Take the new song "Bloodbath," which boasts a guest shot by Deftones' Chino Moreno. Instead of boxing him in, Henson and the band custom made a sensual, moody composition to accentuate the featured artist's signature vocals.

Not surprisingly, the same creative flexibility and awareness that permeates Henson's musical approach also manifests in the space he inhabits. To that end, his Dallas-area home stands as a *monument* to Henson's unique vibes — feeling like equal parts modern art museum, well-curated clothing boutique and den of cozy living.

"I think a lot about the philosophical approach of *feng shui* and always asking: 'Does a room or space flow energy-wise?'" says Henson. Spend any amount of time checking out his home, which *Revolver* recently had the pleasure of doing, and you will undeniably feel the positive energy flow of his gorgeous, functional *and* comfortable space. Below, Henson pulls back the curtain and shares the stories behind some of the key ingredients that create his home's special vibe.

FAVORITE GUITAR

*** Ibanez TOD10N Tim Henson Signature**

I was in Europe, in 2019, in a pawn shop and saw an Ibanez nylon electric guitar and I picked it up. I thought, What the fuck is this thing? I texted Ibanez ... and they told me it was a discontinued, commercially unsuccessful model from 1998. I bought it from the pawn shop and took it home. And the inspiration was ... a lot of times in rap, they'll sample old classical guitar. This way I can make my own samples and use them in beats or send them to producers. I started making loops with it and was just like, "This is insane." So, I called Ibanez and said, "Hey, I want a signature of this." And they're like, "Well, you know, it really didn't do well in 1998..." I was just like, "What the fuck!" So, we made "Playing God" and I sent it to them, and told them, "If you don't make this guitar, some other brand will — and you're going to lose out on a lot of fucking money." Then they were like, "Oh shit, yeah let's do it."

I was living in L.A. for about five years, and ... right when the pandemic hit, my girlfriend Gigi and I kind of got lucky and slipped in [to buy] when the interest rates were hella low. ... This house was built from nothing. Last year, it was just dirt. It took them about six months to build. Me and Gigi have very similar tastes and almost complementing styles, where they're like opposites. The common areas, we just decided to go like super neutral. It just makes for a very peaceful, clean feeling. When I'm on tour ... I end up using public bathrooms or venue showers and it's all disgusting. I wanted home to be kind of a sanctuary in that regard: extremely clean and easy to maintain. So, it was important having a clean peaceful space in here and to have a Jacuzzi bathtub. On the ledge I normally put my weed tray, get the Jacuzzi going and I get high as fuck — then tell Alexa to play peaceful piano music. There's definitely a spa vibe to everything.

FAVORITE SPA MOMENT

* Jacuzzi Bathtub

FAVORITE SPOT TO CHILL

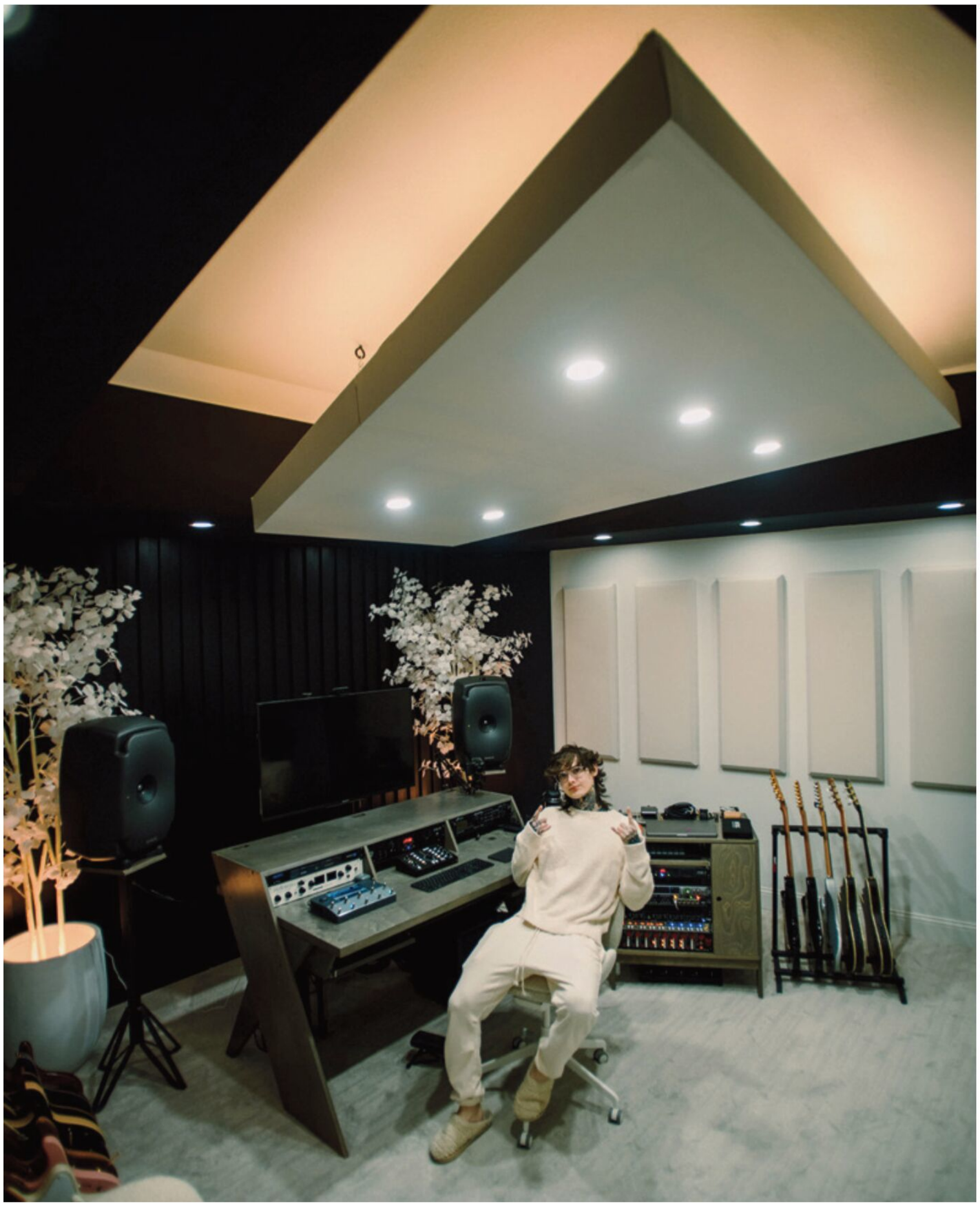
*** Egg Chair**

I watched [fashion designer] Rick Owens' *Vogue* documentary, and it really opened my eyes to having a lot of intention with the things that you keep in your home — because everything in his house he just absolutely loves. It's sort of a minimalistic approach, you know, only keeping items that mean something to you. The outdoor space was important. We have three dogs: a golden retriever, a pug and a miniature dachshund. And they're all insane. They need space to run around. So having the backyard is nice. I let them out every few hours, and depending on how stressful the day is, I go out and get fucking high. It's chill to just light up a joint and sink back into that egg chair.

FAVORITE PLACE TO PULL AN ALL-NIGHTER

*** Recording Studio**

Pretty much the entire upstairs is all studio spaces. Before we renovated it was all one giant room, now we have a live room and a main room. It's completely soundproofed. The nice thing is that we're in a residential area and can record drums at any time of night. Which is really good for me because I rarely work normal business hours. I'm recording pretty much every day. Somebody always needs something. Whether that's me working on my own stuff, me working on Polyphia stuff, or me working on other artists or producers' stuff. Somebody always needs something.



FAVORITE PSYCHOTIC DACHSHUND

*** Mila**

That's Mila, the dachshund. She's three years old and psychotic. ... She's just got the most personality, like ever, in a tiny little dog. She's got tiny legs, if you can't tell ... and her body is *really* long. She's a great dog. She blinks with one eye often. I like to think of her eyes and nose as blueberries. She's just this big bunch of blueberries looking at you.

FAVORITE SHOES

*** Adidas Y-3**

I'm a huge fan of [designer] Yohji Yamamoto and his Y-3 stuff. The dude is always mad tasteful with it. His silhouettes are so insane, like I've been rocking the Kaiwa since 2017. I've got them in every color. He's crazy with it and even just the basics are very functional and comfortable. I want to work with him in the future. I just signed a modeling contract with Mazza Models, so I'm hoping that one day I can be doing campaigns and shit for Y-3.

FAVORITE CAREER KICK-STARTER

*** Marijuana**

The idea was to have a smoking station in every room with a tray you could pick up and move. But I got tired of doing that. So, I just got more trays ... I started smoking weed in eighth grade. It became a huge thing in my life. I started selling it in ninth grade. I also got my first possession [arrest then] because I fucking live in Texas. That kind of sparked my career: I was on probation and *extremely* grounded. I pretty much just went to school and came home ... for an entire year. I wasn't allowed to have people over or go to friends' houses. So I pretty much decided I was going to get really, really, *really* good at guitar.

FAVORITE SATANIC KNIT SWEATER

*** El Diablo**

I've always felt like there's nothing in this world that is for me, and that's where a lot of the inspiration to create comes from. I design a lot of our merch from the perspective of what I would wear. A lot of the pieces in my closet are my favorite Polyphia pieces. Others were gifted from various brands, and then others are statement pieces I'll wear in music videos. I think this shirt is called El Diablo and it's just fucking Satan on a goddamn knit jumper. It is extremely uncomfortable to wear but it looks really fucking cool. With the rise of fast fashion it became easy to have a ton of clothes that you don't give a shit about. That's something I've been trying to be mindful of: How many pieces do I actively like and cherish in my wardrobe.

5 Non-Metal ALBUMS for METALHEADS

Neil Fallon

Clutch's leader hails essential psychedelic funk, prog-rock, electronic and more

INTERVIEW **Rob Menzer**
PHOTOGRAPHY **The Tinfoil Biter**

NEIL FALLON DIDN'T SET OUT TO WRITE A BLEAK CLUTCH RECORD, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE DID WITH *Sunrise on Slaughter Beach*.

"These are some of the darkest lyrics I've written," says the singer of their new and 13th album, which was informed, despite Fallon's initial intentions, by the pandemic. "It shows that you've gotta write from the heart and not the head," he continues. "Art has to come from a sincere place — otherwise it's not really art, it's … marketing."

For over 30 years, Clutch have followed their heart on a sonic journey through hard rock, stoner, blues, alt-metal and beyond. Their creative vision has evolved, but Fallon and Co. have always maintained a core identity and signature sound, which has earned them their unique spot in the heavy-music landscape — and a legion of fiercely loyal fans. ("It's a beer-drinking crowd, it definitely is," Fallon jokes of the thread that binds their fanbase.)

Fallon's lyrical style has also matured with each album. But what remains constant is his love of stories. Take the new "Red Alert (Boss Metal Zone)" — a hard-hitting cut that skewers humanity's gullibility with source material borrowed from sci-fi author Philip K. Dick and a widely shared effect-pedal schematic that "proved" a 5G tracking chip was in the COVID vaccine. Beyond novelists (and conspiracy theories), Fallon points to storytelling songwriters like Tom Waits, Nick Cave, PJ Harvey and Mark Lanegan as endless sources of inspiration. He's an avid and curious connoisseur who's unbound by genre and prone to go on music-discovery deep dives into Delta blues or, most recently, the "really out-there stuff" of French experimental composer Michel Chion.

Here, Fallon reveals more of his listening habits as he walks us through five of his favorite non-metal albums.

BO HANSSON, ***Music Inspired by Lord of the Rings***

This was recorded in 1969 and Bo Hansson was an organist and a keyboardist. Every track is an instrumental interpretation of a chapter from the book. This album was introduced to me [on] the first tour we did with Graveyard [but] I forget [by] who in the band. … This is a regular listen for me — so much so that … my wife usually goes, "Oh no, not this again." But this is a beautiful record. It captures a mood that's just so ethereal.

FUNKADELIC, ***Maggot Brain***

There's a lot of analogies between this band and metal. It's not my favorite Funkadelic record, their eponymous first album is, but I chose this one primarily because it features the guitar playing of Eddie Hazel, who is a criminally underrated, underappreciated guitar player. You can hear the beginnings of stoner rock in the title track, "Maggot Brain." It just melds all the sweetest elements of psychedelia and funk and punk.

DR. JOHN, ***Gris-Gris***

Mac Rebennack's first appearance as Dr. John. In this case, Dr. John, the Night Tripper. This album is terrifying. Listening to it [is] … like spying on some secret rite that I shouldn't be witnessing. It's mostly known now because of "I Walk on Gilded Splinters," which became quite famous after the fact. From what I understand, it was a critical and commercial failure. … Now it's considered one of the most important albums of all time.

TANGERINE DREAM, ***Ricochet***

I'm a big fan of '70s electronic music, sometimes it's called krautrock. … I just love this album. It's got two tracks on it. It's about 40 minutes long. It's partially a studio album, partially a live album. It sounds incredibly modern. … It was recorded in 1975, [and] knowing that they were working with these colossal synthesizers and made an album that sounds like this baffles me. It's good for the headphones.

BERT JANSCH, ***Jack Orion***

He was a Scottish guitar player. His first band was Pentangle … sort of proto-folk rock, British, dabbling in a kind of neo-paganism. Bert is this *beast* of a player and … one of the people that Jimmy Page blatantly plagiarized. He [recorded] "Black Water Side" and Page took it and made "Black Mountain Side." It's the same song. But Bert Jansch's catalog is massive. … So, for the metalhead technical guitar-player fan, this is the guy to listen to.

Mudvayne

A revealing look inside the alt-metal aliens' triumphant comeback tour

TEXT Eli Enis **PHOTOGRAPHY** Wombat Fire

IN SUMMER 2022 THE INCONCEIVABLE HAPPENED: MUDVAYNE REUNITED FOR their first full-scale tour since they unceremonious split over a decade ago. And it was incredible.

Throughout the 21-date North America co-headlining trek with Rob Zombie, they wowed audiences with time-tested bangers like "Dig" and "Happy?" and coated themselves in the same freaky makeup that solidified their place in the nu-metal lookbook back in the early 2000s. The crowds came out in droves, Mudvayne played their hearts out, and, best of all, the band members didn't even want to kill each other.

"We're getting along probably better than we ever have," frontman Chad Gray enthuses. "Better than ever" is a phrase he and drummer Matt McDonough return to frequently during their mid-August call with *Revolver*, which marked their first interview as bandmates since the alt-metal weirdos went on hiatus in 2010.

As history tells it, what started as an unspecified break turned into a 12-year absence from all things Mudvayne. During that gap, the four-piece — Gray, McDonough, guitarist Greg Tribbett and bassist Ryan Martinie — weren't in close contact and never harbored any on-the-low schemes to get back together.

But, in late 2019, the unexpected came to fruition: Mudvayne quietly reconnected and began plotting their return. In 2021, they played four U.S. festival dates. Despite a rough start — Gray unknowingly contracted COVID before their first performance, but powered through — the band found their footing and considered these first shows a success. So, they decided to dive into the deep end with a full-scale tour.

The journey went off without a hitch, and — in a crucial dose of reassurance for the band — the fans showed pure, unabashed gratitude for Mudvayne's long-awaited comeback. "People seem genuinely excited about what we're doing and that's a really fucking exciting feeling," Gray tells us.

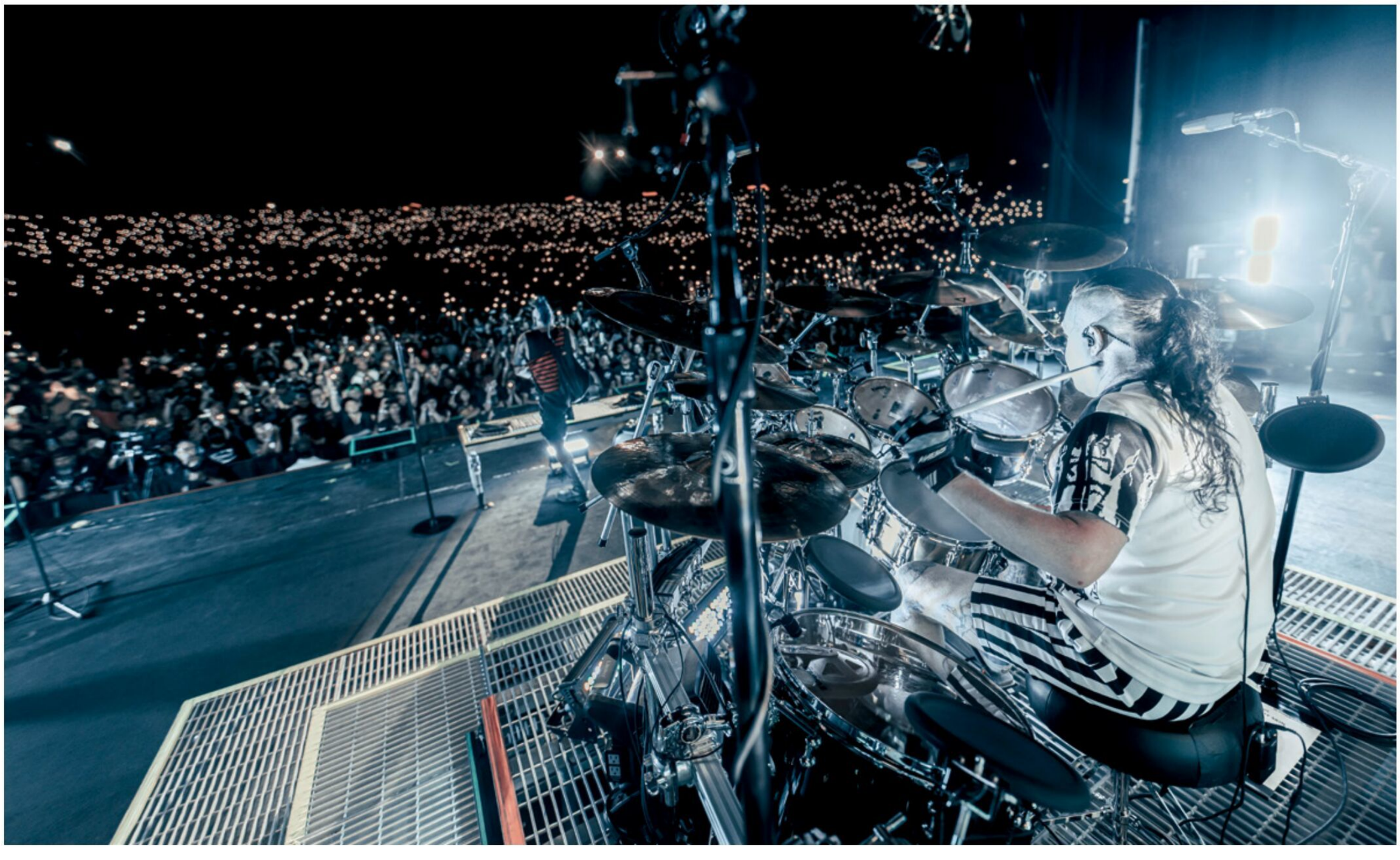
"We basically missed a generation," McDonough adds of their hiatus. "This opportunity for younger kids and people that never had a chance to see us … [has] been incredible."

That's not to say that preparation didn't come with challenges — especially as the pandemic caused months of delays and moving goalposts. "It was intimidating," McDonough admits. "There's lots of confidence issues: 'Am I *really* going to be able to do this?'"

Neither member felt particularly comfortable on the stage during last year's sporadic festival gigs, which took place weeks apart from one another. But getting back into the consistent flow of nightly shows has made them feel unstoppable.

"Now [that the tour happened] it's one of the greatest feelings of relief and weight off my shoulders," McDonough says. "And then to be seeing the positive response. Wow, it's better than I ever could have expected."

Mudvayne's tour photographer, Wombat Fire, was there every night to capture the action. Here are some of the trek's standout moments — experiences that the band, who have new music in the works, are promising to bring to even more fans in the not-so-distant future. Ⓡ



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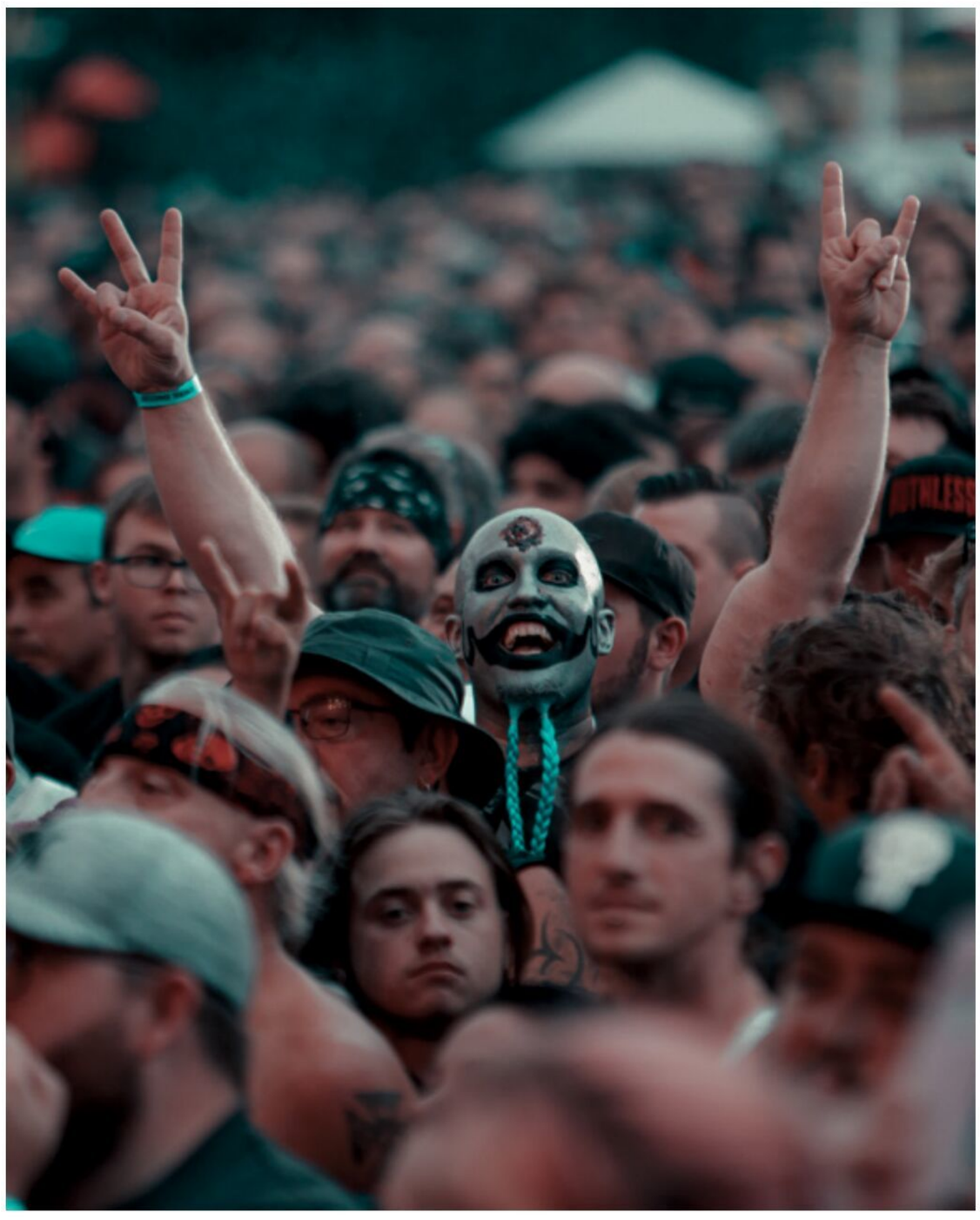

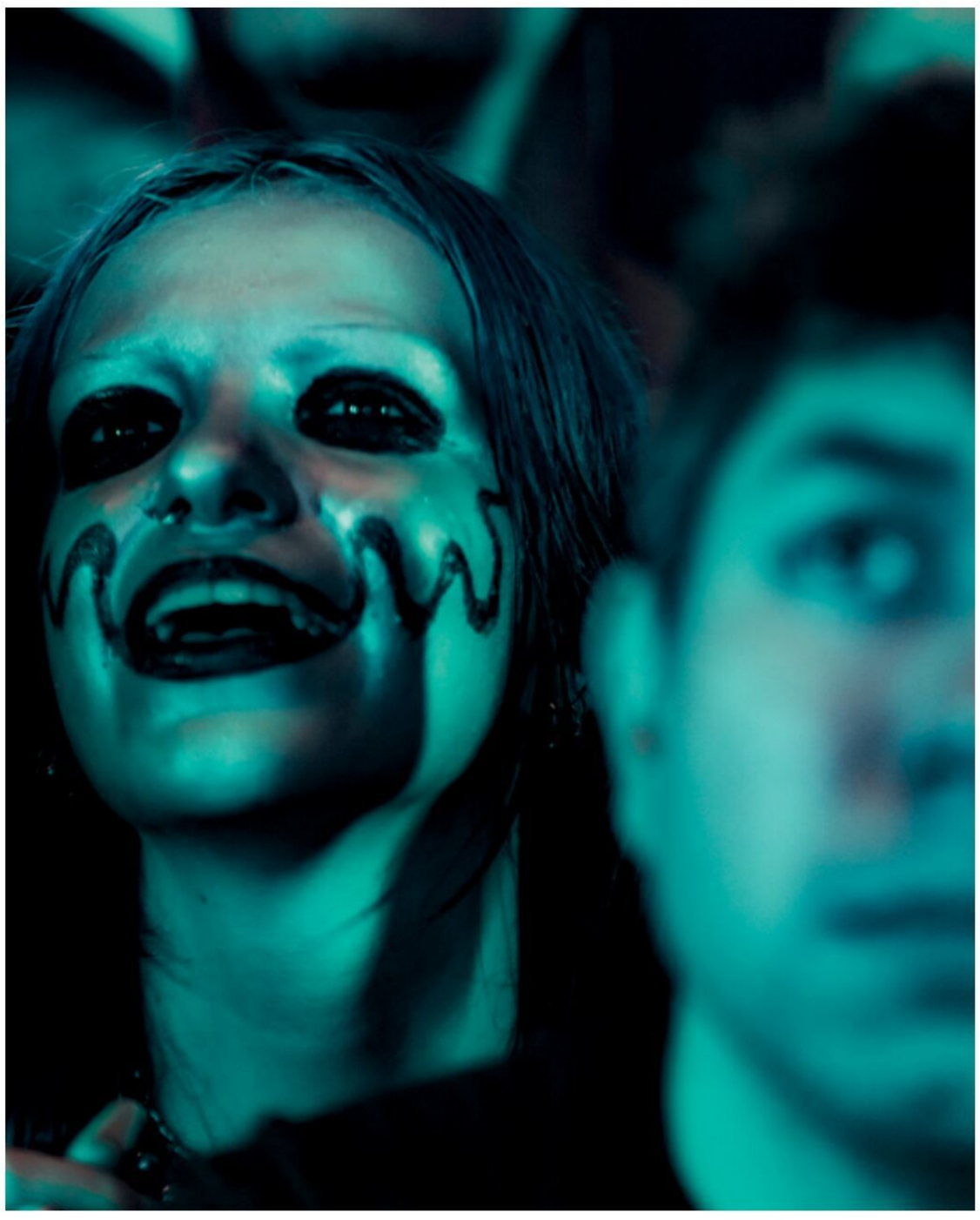

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Q&A: John Tardy

Obituary's vocalist on Florida death metal's OG days, cancel culture and the most satanic thing he's ever seen

TEXT Matt Wake
PHOTOGRAPHY Tim Hubbard

OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES, OBITUARY'S ICONIC VOCALIST JOHN TARDY'S corrosive screams and hellhound growls have helped define and popularize the infamous Florida death-metal style. But lately, the 54-year-old singer has noticed a puzzling shift in his register.

"God, sometimes it feels like my voice is actually *higher* now than what it was," he says. "I'm not exactly sure why. I enunciate things a little bit better nowadays; where some of the older albums, it's almost impossible to hear what the hell I was saying. Sometimes I don't even remember what the hell I said. [*Laughs*] But I've been trying to enunciate … and maybe that just goes with a little bit more confidence in my writing and some of the stuff that I'm talking about."

Rest assured, Tardy's vocals are still *scorching* — and his message comes through loud and clear on Obituary's new *Dying of Everything*. The death-metal pioneers' 11th album (their first in six years) is a total crusher. From the double-kickdrum mayhem of opener "Barely Alive" and sludgy "War" to the rhino-heavy "Be Warned" and thunderbolt "The Wrong Time," the record seethes with vital energy, possessing the spirit of a hungry new band and showcasing the skills of seasoned pros.

That ferocity has been with the group — whose lineup currently includes Tardy, brother/drummer Donald Tardy, longtime rhythm guitarist Trevor Peres, bassist Terry Butler and lead guitarist Ken Andrews — since they first formed in Tampa during its fertile early-Eighties metal era.

As teenagers, the Tardy brothers would ride their bikes across their neighborhood, over to the garages where local bands Nasty Savage and Savatage rehearsed. "They'd be practicing, and they were always so cool to us," Tardy recalls. "They definitely are the ones that made us want to pick up instruments." A few short years later, the Tardy brothers would unveil Obituary (after a couple name changes from Executioner and Xecutioner) and release their killer 1989 debut album *Slowly We Rot* (which was mostly recorded when Tardy was still in his late teens). The singer also credits bleeding-edge bands like Slayer, Celtic Frost and Hellhammer as crucial sources of inspiration. "Those are the bands that got the wheels turning in our head that we want to be as heavy as we can possibly be," Tardy says. "Just make it as *heavy* as you can make it — and, you know, none of that has changed."

Like fellow Florida luminaries Morbid Angel, Death and Deicide, among others, Obituary played a vital role in shaping the region's OG death-metal scene and the style's technical, intense and cathartic sounds. Today, Obituary stand as one of the genre's enduring success stories, and they continue to influence new waves of death metal, including current upstarts Tribal Gaze, 200 Stab Wounds and more.

Dying of Everything proves, once again, that Tardy still has the fire to push Obituary's music, and his voice, into exciting new places. But that doesn't mean he doesn't have to work to ignite that spark, especially during the recording process. "Walking out in front of thousands of people on a festival stage, you're fired up and almost *anybody* can start screaming," he says. "But 11 o'clock in the morning, sipping on a cup of coffee, my dog's lying there next to me … Trying to get in the right mindset and get pumped up to essentially get in a fight with that microphone — it's a challenge and always has been. You've got to get yourself mentally jacked up, do some push-ups, crank the song good and loud, hit that record button, throw the headphones on and just go for it."

In the interview that follows, Tardy discusses the satanic stigma of the early Florida scene, death metal's new wave, his deep love of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Willie Nelson — and why you'll *never* catch him singing about "sunsets and flowers."

WHAT SUBJECTS INSPIRED YOUR LYRICS ON THIS NEW OBITUARY ALBUM? WHAT WAS PUSHING YOUR PEN?

JOHN TARDY I mean, I've never sat down and wrote a set of lyrics, and then went to Donald and Trevor and said, "Hey, guys, I've got these lyrics. Can we try to write a song with 'em?" Never happens that way. I totally feed off Trevor's guitar and when D.T. kicks in [on drums]. ... Now, the lyric content, it has to be something evil or something gory in a way, not to contrast with the music too much. I've kind of got to stick there. I'm not going to start singing about, you know, sunsets and flowers. [*Laughs*] It just wouldn't work out for me, which is OK.

But really, I think my writing has gotten better with every album. You know, early on we were very young ... the first one [*Slowly We Rot*], there was not even a full set of lyrics. So, throughout the years, I take a little bit more time thinking about it. I usually kind of stumble through trying to get the syllables down, even if I'm just saying, you know, "1-2-3!" ... coming up with cool things to say, cool catchphrases. "Weaponize the Hate" is a cool [title], and everybody keeps asking me if that's a political kind of thing, and in a way it kind of crosses my mind. But I try to stay out of that entire realm altogether because you know how that goes. [*Laughs*] No matter what view I might have, if I say it, there's going to be somebody that has a completely different view, and then it creates a mess.

DO YOU THINK TODAY'S CANCEL CULTURE MOVEMENT WOULD'VE KEPT THE EARLY FLORIDA DEATH-METAL SCENE FROM HAPPENING? AND DOES CANCEL CULTURE INFLUENCE WHAT YOU DO, OR DON'T, WRITE ABOUT NOW? I mean, it definitely does not influence me — because I don't care. [*Laughs*] When we first came out though ... We had bands around here like Deicide [and] the local news coverage *immediately* went to all the satanic angles. It was satanic this and satanic that. Blah, blah, blah. They always just wanted to punch us in there. Obviously, we sound a lot like Deicide, but we don't sing really about anything like that. But back then, I remember getting grouped in with that and people thinking that we're some type of satanic band just because we're playing death metal. But I hate to go out and start talking too much about the cancel culture and things because it's just not my gig. I'm kind of self-reliant. I just want to do my job and treat other people like I would like to be treated — but nothing more. And just let me go about my business, you know?

OBITUARY HAS BEEN AROUND FOR SO LONG, I GOTTA ASK: WHAT IS THE MOST SATANIC THING YOU'VE EVER WITNESSED IN THE EXTREME-METAL SCENE? God, what the hell band was it that we toured with ... Watain. They were bringing blood with them on the road and after one show, we were like, "Alright, that can't happen." Because it smelled. It *stunk*. It was everywhere. I remember it was the first night and we walk out afterwards, and the stage is sticky. It was *real* blood all over the place, and on all of their clothes. They wore leathers and things. There are still bands that wear leathers, and you get on a bus with them, and it just smells bad, you know? We're in shorts and T-shirts and they smell bad enough after about seven shows. But then I throw them away. [*Laughs*]

[*LAUGHS*] OK, OUTSIDE OF EXTREME METAL, I'M CURIOUS: WHAT'S THE QUIETEST OR MOST UN-METAL MUSIC YOU LISTEN TO ON A REGULAR BASIS? Oh, dude. I listen a lot of country music, a lot of blues. Obviously, we grew up on classic rock and Southern rock and still listen to lots of it. I love Willie Nelson and listen to [SiriusXM channel] Willie's Roadhouse when I'm in my wife's car, because my car doesn't have XM. ... I really like a wide variety of music. Big [Lynyrd] Skynyrd fan. The Outlaws. We played with Molly Hatchet one time. They literally invited us to their farm here in Florida, which is like in Jacksonville. It's not really close, so we never did make it over there, but it was really cool we got to meet them. I stood onstage and listened to them play and talked to them a little bit. They're a little older than we are and obviously they probably have no idea who we are, especially our kind of music. But that's what's fun about those big festivals. You get bands playing like ZZ Top and Molly Hatchet to Slayer and Obituary. It's fun for the kids, man. But I love my Southern rock.

> "I just want to do my job and treat other people like I would like to be treated — but nothing more. Just let me go about my business, you know?"
> — John Tardy

IS IT TRUE *SLOWLY WE ROT* IS THE ONLY OBITUARY ALBUM WHERE THE GUITARS ARE IN STANDARD TUNING, AND THE BAND'S GUITARISTS STARTED TUNING DOWN AFTER THAT? I believe that's the case. I'm pretty certain that was standard tuning. You know, that [album] was kind of weird. We had written a lot of that and then actually recorded half of it at the old Morrisound [Studios], and then they moved into the new one. Then we got a record deal, and we had to finish it and add two more songs to it. That was also done on eight-track [tape] ... That's how long ago that was. Even thinking about recording to [analog] tape is insane. I think it was [producer] Scott Burns getting a razor knife out and editing things together, and I'm watching tape hit the floor and going, "*What* are you doing?" [*Laughs*]

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NEW WAVE OF DEATH METAL BANDS, LIKE TRIBAL GAZE, 200 STAB WOUNDS AND FROZEN SOUL? THEY ALL OWE A DEBT TO OBITUARY AND SING YOUR BAND'S PRAISES. You know, I haven't heard a lot of those bands, but we did tour with the Stab Wounds guys, super-nice kids. Absolutely loved it. I love seeing young bands getting an opportunity and taking it and running with it. It's tough. There are thousands of bands that are way better than we are — way better than a lot of people — but sometimes things just don't work out for *lots* of different reasons. I love when we get to tour with young bands. You know, we do a lot of work ourselves when we tour and don't bring a lot of people out with us. So, the [younger bands] see that. They see me setting up Donald's drum set. They see all the work we do personally on that stage every day. And even as long as we've been doing it, we just enjoy it. You'd be bored to death on the road if you didn't go out and do something. So I'm like, Get me off this bus. I'll load in some gear and get something set up.

SPEAKING OF METAL KIDS AND SHOWS: DO YOU NOTICE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND U.S. AUDIENCES? I really don't think they're that far off. I think metal kids are metal kids, anywhere we go. For a long time, going back maybe 10 years ago, we would go through Europe, and we would definitely say, "Man, our European crowds are better," because the venues and everything were nicer. Whereas we'd go out in America, and it seemed like you're in a club and the concert was an afterthought. But nowadays, the venues in America are awesome. But really, the metal kids are so similar. And I say it all the time, too — I literally cannot remember the last time I saw a fight at one of our shows. Metal kids are awesome. They come out to support you and have a good time, and it's always fun to be around.

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